

Mother I'm gonna be something in life and I'm not gonna accept you when you need something from me 'cause I won't be there for you like you weren't there when I got taken from you at the age of 5 and 'til this day you still haven't even cared to see or talk to me.

read the rest of Stomper's POW on page 9

Today, we received a letter from someone who used to write for *The Beat* when he was in juvenile hall. Like so many of you, he heard the stories of what lay ahead, but he thought he knew what prison is like and it didn't bother him. He bragged about how he could handle anything! But now that he's living that reality, he wishes that he'd listened to all those warnings because he really didn't know how bad things are behind those bars. There's absolutely nothing nice about it. That truth has knocked all the youthful swagger out of him. He's been reduced to begging for a different reality. And yet, all the begging in the world will not change the tragic truth that he will remain in that world until he breathes his last breath. He is who you should be thinking of every time you write that "they can't keep us forever." Forever is exactly how long "they" can keep you, if you don't make some changes. Forever is exactly how long they will be keeping our Beat friend...

No one can really explain what prison life is like. It must be experienced to be fully appreciated and fully hated for what it is, which means we hope that none of you ever learns just how much you hate it by being in it. In the last month or so, *The Beat* has been reminded of one of those prison realities that most of you have never thought about before, just one more similarity between prison and slavery. It's this: you're not free to read what you want... including *The Beat Within*!

Consider the following examples:

A prison inmate in Florida wants to read *The Beat Within* because he contributes pieces to it. We send him copies of *The Beat*, which are returned to our office with the following notice: "Inmates will be permitted to receive up to five pages of additional written material... Unauthorized mail returned; excess of 5 pages... without prior approval from warden."

Does that sound fair? Is there any magazine that is less than five pages long? This is a rule that the prison can enforce when it feels like it (with *The Beat*, for example), and ignore when it feels like it. Believing that this policy is unconstitutional, *The Beat* wrote a letter to an organization that sues government agencies when they violate the Constitution (called the American Civil Liberties Union, or the ACLU), asking them to challenge this abusive policy. Today, along with that letter from the former juvenile hall writer, we also received a letter from the ACLU of Florida telling us that, "Due to our limited resources, we cannot take all civil liberties cases brought to our attention... In declining to represent you, the ACLU is not passing judgment regarding the legal merits of your case..." In other words, we may have a winning legal argument, but there's no lawyer to make the case. This is prison. Prison administrators feel free to put into practice most any rules they choose, even if they violate bigger human rights principles, because they know they can get away with it.

Sadly, we don't have to cite an example on the other side of the country. We can give you another example right here at home in California. Even though we believe *The Beat* to be one of the most positive contributions prisoners are making anywhere in the country, prison officials don't always share our view. So, when we sent *The Beat* to a former Beat writer now locked up High Desert State Prison, they rejected it. When the inmate appealed that decision, they sent him a single sheet of paper titled, "Disallowed Magazines," and at the very top of the list is *The Beat Within*! We are currently in discussions with the department to try to reverse this decision, but they hold all the cards. Courts don't like to second-guess prison managers when they choose what can and cannot enter the prison population, so there are very few opportunities to overrule whatever decisions they make. When we spoke to the Warden's office, we were told that *The Beat Within* violates the no prisoner-to-prisoner communication rule. When we said that we believe that rule only covers one prisoner writing to another prisoner and not prisoners writing a general piece that all prisoners can read, we were told that's not how they interpret the rule. And who's going to say they're wrong? Courts don't like to "second guess," so it's just another humiliation you're forced to eat when you're behind state bars.

And not just state bars, either. The feds have also rejected *The Beat* when they feel like it. Recently, the Federal Bureau of Prisons has been returning Beats that were sent to a prisoner at Marion Federal Penitentiary in Illinois. We appealed their decision to the regional office explaining the value of *The Beat*. We expressed our pride in the magazine and in your writing. They rejected our appeal by stating: "In your letter you state that the publication is careful to screen out efforts by some to inflame passions or to advocate any kind of violence. You also state *The Beat Within* publishes letters from individuals currently incarcerated. A correspondence published by an inmate and read by other inmates is considered inmate to inmate correspondence via a third party. These types of communications are considered detrimental to the security, good order, and/or discipline of the institution..."

What can we do about this negative view of *The Beat* and their refusal to allow a prisoner to read it? Just about nothing...

We are talking with lawyers about challenging the policy, but so far, most lawyers tell us that they have very little hope that any court will reverse any such prison policy. In short, rather than examine policies to see whether they carry out the mission they have for "rehabilitation," they simply decide to cover their you-know-whats by never having to think at all.

That leaves the thinking up to you. We know *The Beat* will always be seen by some in the prison administration as a threat, because it threatens their control over your minds. (To be fair, others in the system do recognize the strength of *The Beat*, and want to promote it in their institutions.) It may not be news to you that prison administrators have such fear of your voices, but what may be news to you is that they can exercise their prejudices — for that's what their view of *The Beat* amounts to — without fear of contradiction. There was a time when any book except the Bible was considered contraband inside a prison, and all books were banned! Today, such a blanket ban would not be tolerated, so they pick and choose what to ban, and what to allow in. What you value and respect may be what gets banned. If so, it's a decision you'll just have to live with, because that's the nature of prison.

The Beat has been banned in the past from the California Youth Authority, and it took months of letters and phone calls to make those in power reverse that decision and recognize the strength of *The Beat* as a tool of self-expression and self-exploration. In the past, we have suffered a temporary ban from Corcoran State Prison. We have been kicked out of some county juvenile halls, or had to make special provisions to accommodate all kinds of objections.

And yet, we never quit. We never just accept a decision that limits *The Beat* because we believe in *The Beat*. Which means, we believe in you. You have so much power in the pen that you threaten, with words alone, all the steel and razor ribbon and firepower that prisons represent. In a very strange way, the reaction of the prison empire to your writing only confirms what we've always known: you have more power than you know; your words matter; what you say has real influence, even on those in positions of power over you — if only you would recognize the strength of what you hold in your hands right now. If *The Beat* were not so powerful, you can be sure that nobody in control of our prisons would give it a second thought. They do because it is!

We're not sure where this rant is going, except to say these two things: First, you all have more power in your minds than in your hands, more power in your pens than in your guns, more power in your words than in your fists. And second, prison is a place that tries to strip you of everything, even the power to read what you choose and to write what you choose! So, if you value your words and the words of others — if you value *The Beat* — then think very carefully about your next steps after the hall. In here, you've had a tiny taste of what it means to have strangers controlling your day-to-day activities. If you move to the next level, that taste becomes an overwhelming daily reality. And once it does, there's almost nothing you, or anyone else, can do about it!

Moving right along, this week's topics are, "Do You Care Who's President" - In November, we will be electing a new President of the United States. It will either be the Republican candidate, John McCain, or one of the two Democratic candidates, Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton. Do you care who is elected? If not, why not? If so, who do you want to be President? Why did you choose that person? What do you hope the new President will do?

The second topic, "Persuade The President" - Let's pretend that the next President of the United States issues a challenge: You will be in charge of changing one thing in your hood, or in the country, or in the world. But you have to write the President and persuade her or him to choose your proposal. Everyone will be writing and trying to convince the President to pick their proposal, so what can you say that will grab the President's attention and give the assignment to you? What one thing would you like to change, and what will you say to persuade the President to let you do it?

Lastly, the most popular topic, "Mothers' Day" — When we read each issue of *The Beat*, we see how many tears your mothers are left to cry for you when you're taken away. Some mothers are left to cry for the rest of their lives, if they lose a child to the game. Others cry when they visit you because they have such high hopes for your future — hopes that don't include jail. So tell us about your mother, and what makes her special. Then tell us what you think she wants most for you, and what you plan to do for her when you get out because of all that she's done for you.

OK colleagues, this issue goes out to our dear friend Michael Kroll! Who is sixty-five years young today. Happy Birthday Michael! We hope you have a great birthday workshop in Unit 6 and Unit 7 in San Francisco's juvenile hall tonight. Your dedication to *The Beat* always speaks volumes.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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www.thebeatwithin.org

Editor's Note

2

Pieces Of The Week

4

Co-Pieces Of The Week

13

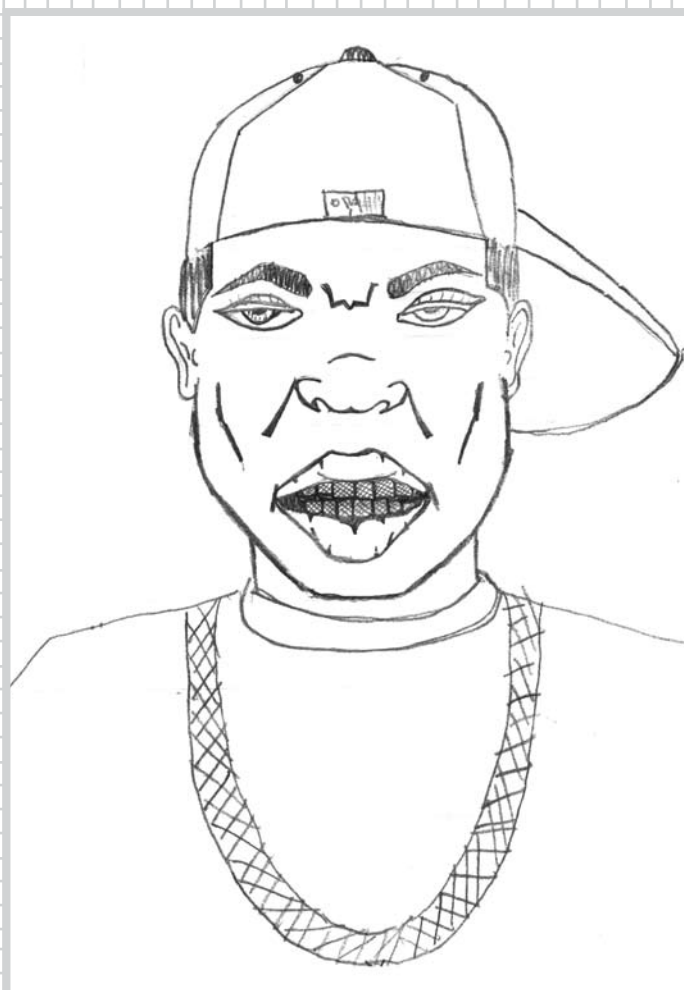
Standouts

20

<i>Alameda</i>	20
<i>San Francisco</i>	30
<i>Santa Clara</i>	36
<i>New Mexico</i>	47
<i>Santa Cruz</i>	47
<i>Arizona</i>	48
<i>Marin</i>	49
<i>Voices In Spanish</i>	50
<i>San Mateo</i>	52

The Beat Without

56



Just Another Soldier In The Devil's Army

Doing whatever and whenever just to get that bomb high,
 knowing damn well you just kissed your innocence
 goodbye.

Grim Reaper gets your soul, planning your death.
 So, be prepared every minute,
 'cause it could be your last breath.

You're on a mission but where are you headed?
 On your way to the dope house to try and score a sack.
 No money, no luck now you're headed on back.

Doing whatever and whenever just to get that bomb high,
 knowing damn well you just kissed your innocence
 goodbye.

Grim Reaper gets your soul, planning your death.
 So, be prepared every minute,
 'cause it could be your last breath.

Lurking through your families prized possessions like a
 true dope fiend.

Stooping that low but you can't even notice,
 you're too much on a paranoia of a trip,
 trying hard not to be seen.

Doing whatever and whenever just to get that bomb high,
 knowing damn well you just kissed your innocence
 goodbye.

Grim Reaper gets your soul, planning your death.
 So, be prepared every minute,
 'cause it could be your last breath.

Back at the dope house, buying too big of a sack.
 On your way home, but you can't wait to hit it.
 So, you spark it in the alley, just upped a few notches,
 'cause now you're really, really jacked.

Doing whatever and whenever just to get that bomb high,
 knowing damn well you just kissed your innocence
 goodbye.

Grim Reaper gets your soul, planning your death.
 So, be prepared every minute,

'cause it could be your last breath.

Not in the right state of mind, now you can't recall where
 you're at.

There's a bony finger on your shoulder, giving you a pat.
 You turn around and it's the Grim Reaper saying you're
 now in the Valley of Death.

You ended up here 'cause your friend just killed you and
 her name is Krystal Meth.

Doing whatever and whenever just to get that bomb high,
 knowing damn well you just kissed your innocence
 goodbye.

Grim Reaper gets your soul, planning your death.
 So, be prepared every minute,
 'cause it could be your last breath.

You think you're in a dream but you can't wake up.
 But this is reality 'cause now you've really fu**ed up.
 Who's fault is it? The devil's, the Grim Reaper's, Krystal
 Meth or your supplier,
 the one who started you in the game?
 There's no one else out there but you to blame.

Doing whatever and whenever just to get that bomb high,
 knowing damn well you just kissed your innocence
 goodbye.

Grim Reaper gets your soul, planning your death.
 So, be prepared every minute,
 'cause it could be your last breath.

Grim Reaper takes you to the devil and the devil says,
 "Your lifetime's up. Now, you're working for me."
 "You're being recruited can't you see?"
 "You're gonna have eternal life as a soldier in the devil's
 army."

-Serena, Durango, Maricopa County

From The Beat: Wow, Serena! This is one amazing ballad poem. It gives goose bumps. This is touching in that it will help others see, feel and hopefully understand what it's like being on Meth. It destroys you, those around you, everything having to do with you and you've expressed that very well in this piece of art. You should be proud of your role modeling and writing skills. Job very well done, we can't wait to see what you will write about next!

The Life Of A Ghetto Child

Silent screams and broken dreams.

Addicts, junkies, pushers and fiends

Crowded spaces and sad faces,

Never look back as the police chase us

Consumed slowly by chaos, a victim of the streets

Hungry for knowledge, but afraid to eat

A life of destruction, it seems no one cares

A man-child alone with burdens to bear

Trapped in a life of crime and hate

It seems the ghetto will be my fate

If I had one wish, it would surely be

That God would send angles to set me free

Free from the madness of a city runnin' wild

Free from the life of a ghetto child

-DLow, San Francisco

From The Beat: In this tight poem, you have captured the sense of being trapped in a life of police chases and chaos and violence and the desire to move away from that life. We wish there was a magic wand we could wave to help free you from "the life of a ghetto child," but there is no such thing. Instead, you have to be your own magic wand. You have to set your goals as firmly as you can, then plan, step-by-step, to reach them. We hope you finish school as the first step in that plan.

Wake Up Call

An eye opener for me is being in here locked up in this
 detention center. Since I've been in here it's been a real
 eye opener for me. I realize stuff that I've never really
 realized before. I started to realize the littlest things in
 life like getting up and going to the refrigerator, or even
 just walking into another room with out asking. I can't
 even get and go tell my brother and sister I love them any
 more.

Since I've been in here it's been a real eye opener for
 me. I realize me being in here effects more people than
 just me. It affects my family, my girl, and a bunch of other
 people that really care about me.

What I need to do to get out of here and change my
 ways. I've got to change the way I think and react to
 things, so me being in here is my eye opener.

-Tim, Land Of Enchantment

From the Beat: It's amazing what a person misses when its taken away from them. You are right; it's not the big things that are missed, but the little things. All you can do is your best to change your ways, and while you are making this change ask for help from people who care. It makes the change much easier.

Who I Am Today Not Yesterday

Today, I am a new person with new thoughts, ideas and beliefs.

Today, I am clean and sober away from meth and everything that can hurt me.

Today, I am a new person.

I miss my mom and dad. I miss my family.

I have made changes in the way I think.

Today, I may be locked up but I'm different.

I am a better person than yesterday.

- Mary, Durango, Maricopa County

From the Beat: Wow Mary! We really like this affirmation of who you are today. We get the feeling you understand the importance of taking one day at time. We hope your positive outlook will be contagious to our readers. We encourage you to share more with us about your life journey. What will you continue to do in your life to make tomorrow even better than today?

Scream

I sit here and pray and pray

Hoping to get released some day

As each day pass my faith gets thin

It releases pain and depression within

I make a call to my dad

But I get an answering machine on Christmas

Damn, it's so sad

I just want a hug or to hold hands

With someone that cares not for romance

I'm sick of searching for someone

When I have so many with my same blood

How could I've been so blind?

My family was there all the time

God I feel so stupid and hollow within

Just let my new drug-free life begin

I need the foster family to get me out

And see what a loving family's about

Then take what I see

And put in little by little to my real family

One day things will change

No drugs and no bad names

But for now this is just a dream

So I'll just continue to sit here

And let the person inside me scream.

-Angela, Durango, Maricopa County

From The Beat: Emotion packed!! Your writing stirs our soul. We read your words of anguish and pain and wish we could wave a magic wand and give you what you desire. Seeking what we know we deserve and finding closed doors can lead to despair, but you sound as if you've not given up hope. You seem to be self-aware that one can seek love in all the wrong places. We encourage you to continue to seek inner healing and love yourself in the ways you desire to be loved. Love may not come from the source you desire, but keep your heart open and expect others to respect you, respecting yourself, as well. In time you will draw the love to you that you d

Different Types Of Hitting Bottom

Hitting bottom can be many different things.

For me, it was when I blew off my family to do drugs.

Sniffing coke for days, having no respect for myself or no one else.

Getting my high was number one, even if I had a drug test.

I used drugs without regret, even when I got locked-up.

I think about drugs and it's lifestyle.

So to me, I've hit bottom-

No regard for people.

- Jonathan, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It takes courage to admit your inadequacies, but you're the sole captain of your ship. You've chosen to be selfish and can end up alone. We suggest you man-up and make appropriate decisions that will enhance your future, not diminish it.

My Baby Sister's Eyes

I'm hurting inside as I'm writing this.

Tears come out my eyes.

It's hard for me to say this, but my mom was right.

I took advantage of my life

thinking everyday is guaranteed.

It hurts to know you can't see your family for a whole year,

and to live with regret.

I put my homies over my family

and in the end the only ones to stay with me were my family. My stupidity led me in here.

Now I'm going to an out of state placement for a year.

It's hard to see my mom cry, and to say goodbye.

I've held so much anger inside.

I keep thinking to myself - everything's going to be alright.

I've smiled now and cried later way too many times.

I don't care if anybody sees my cry.

I don't want mota.

I don't want rocks.

I don't want coke,

nor do I want alcohol.

All I want to do is look in my baby sister's eyes,

hug my mom and tell her how much I'm sorry.

I want to see my other sister - to see her smile.

I don't want my old ways back.

I want my family.

My mom used to say that in the end all you have is your family.

-Niko, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Consider what you're going through a new beginning. It really does sound to us that you've made some important discoveries and realizations. Write to us from your placement. Let us know how your journey goes.

Tear You Apart

Let me tell you about my self

Let me tell you what I do

I'm dark black and would like to be in you

I'll have you hurting and crying on the ground

Or I'll have you feeling like you're flying around town

I can be your worst enemy or your very best friend

Mess around with me and you'll be hooked in the end

You'll do stuff you wouldn't just to see me

I'll have you stealing from stores, your mom

And your friends just for me

I'm like a relationship: your heart's set on me

And soon before you know it you're fatal for me

And when I am gone you'll call to come back

Some consider me a dirty woman a nasty little tramp

I'll try to play you: all I want is you attached

Days with out me your body feels attacked

I'll have you sweating, hurting and praying I'll come back

I'll put you to sleep: maybe you'll never come back

And if you do awake you'll just want me right back

I'm everywhere you go no matter where you are

My real goal is to kill you, to tear you apart

I'll make you so ruthless you won't have a heart

Keeping your girl, family and friends far apart

You can use me in a needle, foil, or a straw

Suck me through your nose,

lungs, or poke through your arm

So now before I go I hope you learned something?

Go messing with me and you'll be six feet DEEP!!!

-Tim, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: You couldn't have said it better Tim. Yes Heroin is a deadly drug of choice. We look forward to reading more.

My 17 Years of Life

Hey what's up? Well, I want to let you readers in on some things that I feel and have locked up inside.

Well, I'm 17-years-old now and I've basically been on my own since I was 12.

I have a mom and dad, if that's what you want to call them after you've read what I have to say. My "mom" is my partner in crime. We've been through jacking fools together, smoking dope together, and even heat had to be pulled out at times! But I guess the relationship between me and my "moms" is a lesson to be learned.

On my dad's side of the story...he started out to be a heck of a good father. He always put his kids first. But now, he doesn't deserve to claim me as his daughter. I feel hate towards my dad. He rubbed his dirty, nasty hands all over me. I hate him so much. Any nasty guy like that doesn't deserve his life.

My parents are one of a kind. They both taught me how to not trust and to think of every man the same. I know I shouldn't do either of those because I have kids and very beautiful kids, at that. I also have a best friend that's been by my side for 16 ½ years. I love her very much. She has my heart and she tells me that I can't be like them because I will just be repeating the cycle and I know I need to break it.

You know I don't like talking about the sad, bad and lonely times in my life because I don't like to dwell on the past even though it's a big part of me – like 80% of me. So, let's talk about the good times.

The good times I've had in my life were when I first met my best friend in kindergarten. We had a play house and we used to take over that play house, too. Homie, I

remember one time I went to Grand Canyon with my school. It was coo'. I guess I had a good time. Then, my best friend and I stopped talking because her dad molested me and I told her family so they didn't want her talking to me because they thought I was lying. She was the first person I started smoking bud, cigarettes, crack, primos, and snorted coke with. When we went to this school we didn't chill with each other because she chilled with a different set of peoples. But anyways, I love the hell out of that girl. Like I said, she has my heart. She is my heart. I miss her so much.

Well, back to the sad parts, now. I'm locked up for my second time. I know some girl in here from school and the hood. I also met some pretty cool peoples in here and there's one girl I just can't stand.

Well, I went to court today and they said they don't have a bed open for me so when they do they're gonna come and get me; probably in 2 weeks or so. I also found out my kids got taken away from my tia and they're in a foster home. I don't know what to think. I don't know if they're separated or together; if they're threatening my kids; or if they're Black, Mexican or White. I don't know and it's tearing me up! Well, now I'm back on this unit with the staff, the girl I don't like, the girls I'm cool with, an old homegirl, and lonely me and my thoughts. I guess this is where I'm at after 17 years – in Durango, thinking of the past and the days to come. I guess that's all I have to say.

- Nica, Durango, Maricopa County

From the Beat: Thanks for sharing your story with us. Writing about your past and sharing your life's story is a great way to process experiences, good or bad, and maybe even come to a new understanding of them. We hope you keep on writing, but mostly that you will learn from the negative experiences in your past and make a better life for you and your kids.

It's A Struggle

Goin' through some thangs
sometimes
It hurt, yea it's a struggle
Keep ya head up stay strong
Use ya muscles
All in this jail cell lookin'
At the walls
Gotta stand on my feet
Gotta stand tall
Happy to go to court but
Then you heard some bad news
Ya or the pen, leave it up
For you to choose
Momma walking out the court room
Tears down
Sittin' in the chair confused
What to do now
Ain't no mo' laughin'
'Cause everything
Done got real
Picture yo' self in the streets
Countin' all the scrill
Kids on the way but you can't
See 'em till they two
Goin' thru some thangs
Thinking yo' whole life is through
Ain't did the crime but karma is
Is a bummer
Servin' all this time man on
Some bullshhh

Seein' your family behind the
Stupid rubber glass
Seventeen years old tryin'
Grow up to fast
Ain't tryna cry 'cause you
Tryna be a man
But that's what men do
So I'm letting you know
That you can
Too self-centered so you don't
Ask for help
You keep it all in and you
Destroy yo' self
Feel way better when you
Let ya feelings out
And now that you expressed
Yo' self you can't close
Ya mouth
Haven't been to school so you
Can't get a job
But yes the hell you can
It's just gon' be hard
Worried bout protection so you
Gotta have a gun
And now generation thinks shootin'
Guns is just fun
Lil' ol' kids thinking it's the
Thang to do
So when they grow up they
Want to learn how to shoot
See us sellin' drugs and see

Us robbin' stores
But they don't know how it
Is behind closed doors
Juvenile Hall, YA or the prison
Get on ya' knees and ask for
forgiveness
All ya' homies got killed so
Now you think it's over
Another Rest in Peace to
Another fallen soldier
Ya sittin' in jail now you
Worried bout ya peeps
Keep ya eyes open or stay on your
feet
Paranoid turn around lookin' for the
cops
Now you doin' something wrong
Ya' products full of rocks
Everything messed up so now
You call it quits
Now you out in the streets
Doin' the same shhh
robbin' and stealin',
maybe even dope dealin'
But I got a new life lil' ninja
I got children

-Lil' Hell, Alameda

From The Beat: Congratulations on a breathtaking poem! You had us all mesmerized when you were reading it – and this is just another example of how your heart is as big as your talent and your talent is as big as your heart! Keep writing, no matter what.

How I've Changed

I've chosen to write about how I've changed and how I'm going to change while being in detention. I've been in here for 8 days now and I know what you're thinking... how could someone change in 8 days? Well, I did. I've changed the way I think because I might be in here for another month or so. I've changed because I finally realized that I messed up and that it's my fault and no one else. My state of mind is good, now. I want to do good when I get out of here and that's how I've changed.

Before, I didn't care about these things at all. I didn't have a care in the world. The only thing I cared about was partying and being out and about. I was never home, even though, I would promise my aunt that I wouldn't run away anymore. I did it anyways and I know it hurt her for me to be on the streets and not be in school. I don't know why I didn't care. I would feel bad and all but I would still do it. I was out doing things I wasn't supposed to and was doing really bad things.

I don't know why I did the things I was doing but it hurt my aunt and she's all I have in my life. She raised me. Now that I'm in here, I know how much I hurt her. She never wanted me to end up like my parents. I mean they weren't bad people, but they messed up their lives. They both did drugs and were in and out of my life. My dad is in prison and I don't know where my mom is, but she's out there somewhere. I always thought to myself that I wouldn't end up like them, but now that I'm in here and I've had the time to think it scared me, 'cause I'm becoming my parents.

I've been thinking that I'm going to change when I get out of there and I've never thought like that before. This is how I think I've changed and I know I'm going to change more while I'm in here and that's for the good.

Thank You.

- Kathleen, Durango, Maricopa County

From The Beat: Change can be interesting, adventurous even, but many people tend to view change (or the unknown) with trepidation. You speak of embracing change, recognizing that you have not been on the road or path in life you desire. Truthfully acknowledging where you've been and taking responsibility for the outcome of your choices is a good first step. We encourage you to set goals for your life that will challenge you, but also be reachable. You can break out of the mold. Your life may be pliable as clay or resistant as a rock. Your attitude is the determining factor along with your determination to not give up. What goals are you setting? Who do you want to be? How do you want to be treated by others?

This Lady Called "Mother"

Try living in my shoes just for a day.

Your mother: a gemini diagnosed with manic bipolar depression.

She smokes and get drunk off Coronas and sips half pints 'till they are gone.

One minute you're her princess. The next you're the piece of feces she just left in the toilet.

Damn life is hard living as her bowel movement.

She walks around with her nose and face scrunched up at you.

Everything you do is wrong.

You throw imaginary remotes and phones in your sleep, you slam doors you're not even near,

you sneak in your imaginary friends from Fremont.

Ha! Right. friends from Fremont?

Tell me how would you live in my shoes with a mother like her, diagnosed with manic bipolar depression?

-Diamond girl, Alameda

From The Beat: Diamond Girl, no one could live a healthy life under these conditions. We wish you didn't have to go through this either, and are glad that you won't be going back. We also hope your mother can get the mental health support she so obviously needs...

My New Mom

I love my mother to death but when it comes to this day that we have just for her - I get a little sad, because my mother was not there for me. My mother was an off and on mom. She would leave for days at a time and now she's gone. In my head, she is no longer my mom. Mother's Day brings my little sister down a lot, and that is a really bad pain to see my sis cry like that because of what our mother did. I think, in a way, it is good that my mother is gone because it won't hurt as bad anymore. Like if she came, we would get attached and then she would just be gone again. So Mother's Day is a day that I'm a little sad.

It has been really hard for me to get along with most women that my dad is interested in. I made this thought in my head that I was the only girl for my dad, the one that was like his right-hand man. I would always put the girl that my dad got with through hell and back, so she would just give up on the relationship, because I guess I was afraid to get left by that girl or I was scared that my dad was going to chose her over me and my little sister.

One day, I met this girl Jodie and I just had an immediate connection with her and I found out that my dad and her got together. And for some reason I got really, really mad. I think that I was jealous. But me and her had a heart to heart and then I loved my dad being with her because she told me that she was not trying to take him away from me and I felt a lot closer to her and I loved the way that she made me feel. And on Christmas Eve, I went with my dad to get a engagement ring and he proposed to her and I was there and that was the best Christmas present that I have ever had. I love her like a mom. I know that she is not my mother but I love her like one. Right now, she is locked up but she is gonna get out in two months and I want to be there when she gets out.

- Samantha, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Being open to new relationships that our parents get involved in is tough at any age. But finding someone that you connect with and that your father loves sounds like a great situation. Thanks for writing this powerful piece.

I Want To Be Somebody

Man, really I ain't feelin' none of these topics. But The Beat brought a special guest that made me look at life a whole different way. I mean, I'm already looking at life differently because, fo' real, I got plans for my life.

I know a lot of ninjas come to jail and start talking that change shhhh. Hell, I'm one of them. But I'm actually moving and striving towards my goal to change. I wanna change for the better - the better for myself and my family. I wanna have a wife and kids and go to college.

But anyway, the guest speaker was shot in his head over a bag of weed. What that tell you? It tell you that ninjas is haters. I ain't tryna go down like that. Especially over some 'dro. Shhh! I wanna be somebody, do something with my life.

Well, shhhh, that all I got. I hope you ninjas who read this take time and think, 'cause if you wait too long, time gone pass you up, 'cause time don't wait for no man.

-Money, San Francisco

From The Beat: We would hate it if you decided to stop writing for The Beat (as you have threatened)! We're not sure if Brian's being shot over a bag of weed shows that "ninjas is haters" or not, but it does show that too many human beings value money (or drugs, or things) over other human beings, and that's like spitting in God's face. You have what it takes to fulfill your dreams. You belong in college. You've learned enough to teach your children how to live, and how not to live. But you have to stay true to your dream, and not fall back on old strategies that haven't worked very well to move you forward. Just keep your eyes on the prize, and remember how very fragile life is.

My Mom

Well the topic is about Mother's Day. Well this topic is very interesting because probably everyone is going to write about the same thing. Here it goes. Well my mother is special because of all the things she has done for me.

First, she gave birth to me. She probably didn't think that I would end up here. And she takes care of me, because without her I would probably be dead or something.

I don't remember my dad ever taking care of me or anything, but that's hat my mother was there for. Also, she divorced my father and she's been taking care of me and my three other siblings.

I know she wants the best for me in life. She doesn't want me to struggle as much as she is right now. She is getting old and she's getting more tired everyday. She has enough problems already with the rent bills and how she's going to put food on the table. So when I get out I'm going to get a job and give her the check to at least lighten up the load of all those bills. I'm going to get my high school diploma so she can be happy and at least be proud of something so my family shuts up. They think they're much better than us because their kids go to college, this and that. But that's good for them, but they don't know what their kids are doing. Just because I got caught makes me the bad guy. But I don't care. The only thing I care about is my mother and my family.

I lost a homie. May he rest in peace and I don't think I can describe what his mom is going to feel when Mother's Day comes around and he's not there to tell her happy Mother's Day. So RIP Lil' Rascal. That's WORD TO THE WISE!!

- Birdy, Santa Clara

From the Beat: You've got a great mother, and you've got some great goals. We hope you'll succeed in them. It will be a challenging path, but we believe in you. We know that you're mom will be there to support you. If you rely on your ability to do good, and on your loving mother, you will do great things.

It Don't Really Matter None

And now reporting to the host, Lil' Skipa...

What's poppin' with The Beat? This the Skip ninja broadcastin' live out this SF county, know what I'm talkin' 'bout?

But to the subject at hand, the election is coming up and the big question is will Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton make history? To be honest it really don't matter. Ain't nothin' about to change. We too busy fightin' Iraq for some oil and so-called "terrorists" when we got terrorists killing each other in our neighborhoods.

We worried about oil, but every few minutes in the Bayview District, Sunnysdale, Potrero Hill, Fillmore, people drop. And what happens? The government don't do nothing. They make it seem like California — San Francisco, specifically — don't exist. Sure, they try to start little peace rallies, but what it do? If anything it make it worse.

Of course I wish it would change, but it ain't. It's 2008 and a new president is coming. If it's Obama, I wouldn't be surprised if he was assassinated.

-Lil' Skip, San Francisco

From The Beat: To be honest, we have to agree with your analysis, even though we hope you're wrong. (We're curious, though, why you think peace rallies make things worse.) Why do you think the government can see "national emergencies" in faraway places like Iraq and Afghanistan, but not see the emergencies right here in our own backyards? If the level of violence and killing were happening in richer, whiter neighborhoods, do you think the government would be as unresponsive? If the President can't change things, what will? (Do you have a preference between these candidates for President?)

Freedom Calls

Locked up behind these solid walls
The death of the future but freedom call
I want out but it's crazy, I can't leave the life
Freedom calls but I can't think twice
Should I stay? Should I go? I'm so confused
Life twisted lies that steams and brew
Calling out for freedom but gone forever
Don't want to be a statistic the white man pleasure
Crack heads, D-boy, whatever you call it
The power generation but no one saw it
Killings, beatings and bear skin drama
The fight is lost and having no mama
But in all the spirit stays within my soul
Live your life and never get old
One day you'll win, you'll win it all
Lock down forever, but freedom will call.

-Lil' Mainy, Alameda

From The Beat: All you can do is stay strong in that place. It's a harsh reality of life but if you're able to get through that you'll get through anything. Freedom is always calling, what are you going to do when you are finally back in her arms to stay there?

Sad Tears

There was a good mother with one son
She brought him up right never to do wrong
The kid listened to rap and some gospel songs.
The kid was a good kid, raised by good people
Until five months later the kid seen a pistol.
The kid told his mom that's what he was told to do.
But the mom told him don't worry
Leave it alone it don't belong to you.
So that's what the kid did.
Soon birthdays pass and the kid gets older
The kid's 16 now in the 10th grade, a grade A student.
Now one day the kid moves to a new city he don't know
nothing about And starts a new school and the kid's lost
He never seen kids wear clothes like that or talk like
that.
They look like people from the songs of rap.
Well as you know soon the kids makes friends
One of them is kind of fat.
The fat kid says to the new kid you wants some grapes?
The kid says yes to the grapes for he thought it was food
The kid says that will be ten for the grapes.
The new kid gives him ten and the fat kid give him the
weed
The kid say's what's this the fat kid says it's yo' trees.
The kid don't want it but the fat kid's gone
So the kid walks home, humming a little song
When he gets there he goes to his room
And the mom smells something that smells kind of new
She goes to his room to see weed on his floor
She gets mad and tells him to throw it out the door
Another kid seen him and said "I'll give you ten"
The kid says ok but it's not what he thought
When the mom walks out to see her son
She found him on the ground next to a gun
And a puddle of blood the mom breaks down and cries
She prays to God who lives in the sky..
The day comes to bury her son...
She looks into the coffin as it brings her to fear...
And she prays for God to bring her baby back with her
sad tears.

-Lil' Josh, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a heartbreaking and sensitive fable for us all to think about, because even though you wrote it as fiction... it's too true in too many lives. Thank you for honoring our loved ones in "Sad Tears."

Mother

Mother I remember when I was little and you used to hold and take care of me.
 Mother I remember those days on my birthday when you used to make cakes for me and throw me parties.
 Mother I remember when the first time I got in trouble and you just talked to me.
 But then Mother there was the day you met my step-dad, and at that time I didn't know it would be the worst day of my life.
 Mother I remember when you met him and you stopped holding and taking care of me.
 Mother I remember when you stopped making cakes for my birthday.
 Mother I remember the first time I got in trouble, he beat the shhh out of me and I hated you for not doing anything.
 Mother I remember when I got taken away from you and it seemed like you didn't care.
 Mother I remember when I got locked up and you said you didn't want nothing to do with me.
 Well Mother I'm gonna be something in life and I'm not gonna accept you when you need something from me cause I won't be there for you like you weren't there when I got taken from you at the age of 5 and til this day you still haven't even cared to see or talk to me.
 So I guess it's like you never even wanted me.
 But there is a lot of other people that need me so now I'm happy even without you in my life.

- Stomper, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow. This is one of the most powerful pieces we have ever seen. Not just in the Beat, but anywhere. The style, the language, the flow, the emotion - it's all just amazing. Stomper, you obviously have a huge amount of talent as this piece shows, and we're excited to see how you're going to use it in the future. Keep writing, because God doesn't just hand out talent like this; it's a gift and if you can use it, as we are so confident you will, there truly is no limit to what you can accomplish in life.

17, Pregnant, In Juvenile Hall

17, pregnant, in juvenile hall
 Thinking to herself, "How low can I fall?"
 10 weeks away, a new baby will come
 Hopefully by then her time will be done
 All she can do is wait to find out
 Hoping by the time the baby's born, she'll be out
 With court 5 days away, she thinks to herself
 "All I need is a little bit of help.
 Help to keep me on the right path
 So that as a mother, I won't do bad.
 I know I've screwed up and now life's a test
 Hopefully this test won't put my baby in CPS."
 She tries her best to explain to them all
 That her place is at home, not in juvenile hall.
 All she wants to do is take care of her baby
 But her actions and words contradict each other lately
 So nobody believes her when the truth is all she tells
 She thinks, "My baby in CPS will make my life living hell."

17, pregnant, in juvenile hall
 Thinking to herself, "How low can I fall?"

-Vanessa, Durango, Maricopa County

From The Beat: Vanessa, this is hopefully the lowest you will fall. Instead of asking yourself, "How low can I fall?" ask yourself more positive questions like, "Where's or who's my help going to come from?" How can you prevent any more 'falls'? How are you going to fix this life you've created before you have your baby? Aside from these questions, this is a nice poem, nice rhyme, and nice realization. Juvenile hall isn't a place for a pregnant 17-year-old or for a mom so don't repeat what brought you here. Good luck and best wishes to you and your baby.

This My Life

I was just a kid on a skateboard about four years ago
 Until I realized that I didn't have a dad
 And my uncle was sentenced to death-row.
 I started slangin' weed for my cousin but kept it on the low
 And I was in the fast lane with my pedal to the flo'
 I was headed nowhere fast but I was always on the go
 yeah I'm black and Mexican, tell me something I don't know.
 Making hella dough
 Grindin' on my skateboard but that was a quick road to destruction.
 Most people talked shhh about me but little did they know
 I was like a volcano ready for eruption
 My grandma would say you're this close to destruction
 And I knew what she was talking about
 But I didn't care I was grindin' and getting' smoked out
 And my grandpa would tell me that I was headed up the wrong path And on a dangerous route
BUT I DIDN'T CARE!
 'Cause at that time I didn't think my life was fair I was always Looking for my daddy but he was never there
 When my dad passed away my mom really went crazy
 She started using drugs and stayed in her room and got hella lazy.
 I was only eight or nine but I knew what was going down
 My dad was known by many people and yeah he was from the town.
 Our house got shot up a few times and me and my mom would hit the ground.... And when the shooting stopped
 I wouldn't dare to make a sound.
 Soon after I would start to cry
 And I would look toward my mom and she would have a frown.
 Personally I didn't think my dad cared about anything
 He was living life in Oakland like a king with no queen
 My daddy was out for himself doing his own thing
 But I'll always love and respect my dad for a human being
 And I remember those times when I heard my mom cry behind closed doors.
 I would try and ignore the painful cries but it seemed like a painful loud roar And my mom started selling our furniture & I would have to sleep on the floor. But I have much love for my mom she's the one that I adore
 Growing up I had a ruff life but I wont let no one bring me down....
 I'll walk around like a king & with a smile on my face wearing a golden crown. I'm not going to let no one change my mind
 I'm turning my life around, 'cause I was once lost but now I'm found.

-Espo, Alameda

From The Beat: Your own rhymes can be your compass, the way you'll find a direction you can't expect less because excellence is your predilection and success your best digression don't forget the past remembering it is your protection from repeating the same mistakes or abandoning your progression.



Mr. President, We Need Jobs

I would persuade the President to allow more youth to have jobs because I guarantee the majority — about 95% of the kids in here — are in here because they say they need money. So if the government give the kids jobs in they 'hood, they won't have a excuse to say they slipping 'cause that's always the excuse they give. If they have the opportunity to get legal money. they won't be in here. So now I believe that's all it will take to stop so many youth to not be incarcerated.

-Jr, San Francisco

From The Beat: This sounds so simple, but in fact it's a very profound partial solution to a very profound problem. We often wonder why the government can pour billions and billions of dollars into the cause of killing people (Iraq) or to imprison people (200,000 in California alone), but can't pay poor people to do real work, even if just cleaning up the streets. We like your suggestion very much, and think there is something fundamentally wrong with a government that doesn't take care of its own citizens.

Solitude

Empty and alone
My body shivering
I'm cold

The walls are closing in
And laughing in my face
The girl I see in the plastic
mirror is a disgrace
Thrown around like a useless
piece of trash from place to place
Here I am again an animal in a cage
My memories haunting me
again

All of my past replays
Flashes of the blood pouring
from my wounds
that I had violently self-
induced
I feel the warmth of the blood
slip down my skin

The redness like the
devils crawling out from
within

Here I go again feeling
helpless and alone
I feel my heart race the rate is
overthrown
Here I go again just another day
To watch the moments of my
life waste away.

**-Angela, Durango, Maricopa
County**

From The Beat: All life is dignified, no human's worth is questionable, just one's decisions. Life is a precious thing. Preserve it. Your past is set in stone and can't be changed, just learned from, but your future is in your hands to craft as you will. What will you craft with the life, skills, talent and mind and dreams you possess?

Alone

It's another day alone, sittin' at my crib thinkin, "what is there to do"? Day and night alone seems like no one is coming home. The heck with it, I'm rolling to my boy's house to get high, and smoke another blunt to take away the pain, drink a couple 40oz to forget about being a lonely man. I'm tired of the shhh, being lonely, and wondering why my dad had to die.

My mom is always telling me to stay out of trouble. But does it look like I listen? No, 'cause I'm getting caught up in this system.

People ask me why I'm so bad, it's because I had to raise myself since I was 7 years old. Being left alone, mom always at work, and my dad, he's just a crack fiend. He put me in danger, by seein' horrible things people droppin' like fly's, hearin' them scream, and pleads to let those innocent. Life, and live another day to see their family, man.

Now it's all over, my dad got killed in a drug deal. Now it's just my mom, but it's really only me.

Another day alone now I'm locked up in a cell they won't let me out, lookin' out the window thinkin' and dreamin', if I could just fly away, and be free again. Not to have to worry about the Judge, District Attorney, DA, and Probation. Man I wish I could just say screw them all, but I can't because they'll just muck me right back.

-Alon, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: You speak a painful truth, now what? What's your plan to beat the odds? We have faith you have the strength to make better choices and to live a life free of the system despite the hard work that lies ahead.

Mi Madre

Me siento triste porque no estoy con mi mamá. Como quisiera estar con ella en este día tan especial. Como quisiera estar al lado de ella. Lamentablemente no estaré porque me encuentro en prisión.

Tengo las esperanzas de estar afuera para felicitarte y darte muchos besos aunque no te mereces solo eso. Yo sé que esperas más de mí respecto a mi personalidad.

Algún día te dare esa gran noticia del cambio de mi vida. No te puedo decir cuando sera pero algún día hare que te sientas la madre más feliz del mundo.

Yo sé que tú sufres mucho por mi comportamiento, pero también sabes que todos cometemos errores. Te prometo que algún día cambiaré y lo hare por ti que eres la mejor madre del mundo entero. Yo aún entiendo que sufres mucho por la forma como me porto.

Sabes también sufro mucho cuando te veo llorar por mi. Tus lágrimas no merecen ser derramadas por mí. Sabes tengo muchas cosas que quitar de mi vida. Lo hare por ti porque te quiero mucho. Eres mi valioso tesoro.

Algunas cosas que hago lo hago por ti y por otras personas que avitan en mi mente y en mi corazón. Nunca podre pagarte por lo que has hecho por mí. Me lastima que no he valorado, pero he pensado en mi futuro y sé que con la vida que llebo no llegare a ningún lado.

Po eso quiero cambiar y quiero que me apoyes mucho para que juntos podamos salir adelante. Muchas gracias por el amor que me das. Y ten presente que te amo.

From The Beat: Se nota de volada que quieres mucho a tu madre. De la forma como hablas de ella, nos haces ver la gran mujer de madre que ha sido en tu vida. Tienes una buena persona que siempre estará ahí para ayudarte en todo. Es hora que tú empieces a demostrarle lo que ella se merece. Ella se merece que cumplas con las promesas que has hecho. Solo recuerda que nunca hay que hacer promesa si no las vas a cumplir. Esperamos y las cumplas porque ella se las merece. Buena suerte y dale lo que se merece.

My Mother

I feel sad because I'm not with my mother. I wish I were there in this special day. How I wish to be by her side. Sadly, I won't be there because I'm in prison.

I have hopes to out and congratulate you and give you all the kisses you deserve. I know you expect more from my personality.

Some day, I'll give you that news that I've changed my life. I can't tell you when, but it will be one day that I will make you the most happiest mother of this world.

I know you suffer so much from my behavior, but you also know that we all make mistakes. I promise that some day I'll change and I'll do it for you who are the best mother of all. I understand that you suffer for the way I am.

You also know that I suffer so much when I see you crying. Your tears shouldn't deserve to be shed over me. You know what, I have so many things to eliminate from my life. I'll do it for you because I love you. You are my most valuable treasure.

Some things I do, I do it for you and for other people that are in my mind and heart. I can't repay all the things you've done for me. It hurts me not appreciating you. I've thought about my life and know that if I continue living the life I'm living, I'm not going anywhere.

That's why I want to change and I want you to support me so much so we can succeed together. Thank you for the love you give me and please keep in mine that I love you.

-Anderson, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's obvious how much you care for your mother. The way you express yourself about her, make us understand the type of mother she has been to you in your life. You have a great mother who will always be with you to help you. It's time you start showing you care for her. She deserves that you keep your promise and make them a reality. Remember you should never make a promise if you aren't going to keep it. We hope you make it through. Good luck! And give her what she deserves.

Thoughts On Hitting Bottom

The sands of time cannot be stopped, because of this every thing has a beginning and an end.

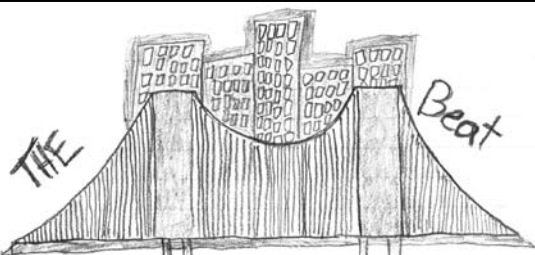
Some people say life is to short. The funny thing is they are right, and the people that can come out and say this they know the end is near. They do everything they can do to make there last years worth while. Maybe because when they were young they had no money, mom, and dad or were put through hell as a kid. Having to fight for his life or his next meal, things some people take for granted.

Things don't always start off bad for people; some kids grow up with a mom, dad, and have a good home with food and money and never have to fight for anything they wanted because it was given to them. Then they meet someone that tells them, "hey come try some of these drugs they will make you feel like you are on top of the world".

Some people say no, some say yes. When the person says yes they get hooked on drugs and can't get enough, and their family is not so lucky anymore. When the money, and food is gone they sell their stuff for money, when their stuff is gone they get a pay loan that they can't pay back, so they don't have good credit, so they lose their home then their job. When all that's gone it's like they never had it at all, so listen to me when I say drugs are no good at all.

- Isaac, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: We respect your truths. No denying, problems occur when using drugs, and that you spell out very clearly.



Dedicated To A Counselor Ram From Juvi

I dedicated my life to living in the streets
 Claiming many colors I would never be beat
 Putting it down for the homies in the 'hood
 Showing no emotions like any other should
 Caught up in the system like a systematic rhythm
 Took another mission which ended my last prediction
 Now facing life in jail with no hope of parole
 Only 18, fool, now I paid my final toll
 Only thing that satisfies me is I won't break another law
 In this steel cool place seeing all these newborn flaws
 Only thing that's missing is the Vietnamese race
 But it's okay cause I met a brand new face
 Showed me all the rules who lent me all the tools
 She's a pretty little lady who acts like a baby
 But changed my life so I owe her this short write
 When you ever read this, please know this is a fact
 You are my guardian angel who saved me from the pack
 The ram who took the devil out of the inner sight of me

-Ly, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Damn, Ly, we know you are not long for The Beat, and we will miss the hell out of having your pieces. We are so sorry it took coming to a place like this to meet someone as special as the "guardian angel who saved you from the pack." At the same time, any time you meet someone who has opened your mind and heart, that is something to celebrate. We hope that wherever you go from here, you'll continue to write about what you're experiencing for your fans at The Beat, and that includes all of us.

My Mom

When I get out, I'm gonna try to do good and change my life around. I miss my mom a lot and I know that she misses me even more than I miss her. I always put her through lots of stuff, and when you look back at it, it wasn't worth it.

I don't want her to go through a life of bailing me out. I want the best for her and I know she wants the best for me. She's getting old and I don't want her to keep on bailing me out. I want for her to kick back and enjoy her life. I know that I've been putting her through lots of stuff and I want to stop, and I'm gonna do it for her.

I don't want people to judge her because they don't even know her. She's the best mom and I wouldn't want to change her for anybody. She has always been here for me and it's time for me to be there for her.

I'm gonna try hard to get out of probation and off everything and start being a man and stop these little kid things. It's hard doing this stuff to her, putting her through so much stuff.

I'm gonna stop doing drugs and that stuff, and getting caught up with stupid stuff and doing time. I've learned my lesson.

When I get out I'm gonna try to graduate high school, get my diploma and go to community college. I also want to graduate there to see my mom happy and know that she's raising me right.

I forgot the last time she was proud of me. I want her life to be like that her son graduated from high school, became an engineer, made good money to support her, and make right money, not dirty.

I know I started off late, in the wrong direction and in a bad way, but I really want to become a great guy. I don't want people to judge me or label me as a troublemaker and all this bad stuff.

If people judge me, it's like they judge my mom too 'cause she born me and I don't want her to regret that she born a bad child.

I love her and I'm proud of her. I don't want people to judge her 'cause of all the stupid things I did in the past, but as what a great woman she became. I don't want people to judge her if they don't know her. I love her very much for all the things she did.

-Cuong, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Good for you! She doesn't deserve to go through hard times due to your mistakes. Like you've said, she is getting older and she deserve her last years living a life full of joy. Wouldn't be fabulous to make your mom cry over happiness and joy? Remember "I'm going to try" doesn't work. If you want to change, the best phrase to se is, "I'm going to". Everything is possible as long as we are still breathing in this world. Make yourself the man she expects to see. Great piece! Good luck!

Worst Enemy

What's up Beat? I just want to let you'll know that I am my worst enemy. You want to know why? Because think about it. Every thing you do has a consequence, sometimes good; sometimes bad. But if you wasn't your worst enemy, then why you in jail? Why when we in here we be like it wasn't me, it was him, knowing damn well it was you.

We get high of a thizz and do some thing stupid or get drunk and do some thing stupid, or you be sober and do some thing stupid. What I'm trying to say is we the one who put are self in this predicament nobody else. And when you get in jail you be like damn I could did that or I could of did this.

The fact is you steady coming back to jail like me you are your worst enemy straight up. 'Cause the choices you make got you up in here but I'm not no damn teacher or nothing, but just think about it.

-Festy, Alameda

From The Beat: Man we couldn't have said it better ourselves. Matter of fact, you have to be the smartest kid in there for saying all that real shhh you just said. Everything you said is true. We hope you take your own advice and put it to some use.

Manhood

Manhood is a big responsibility because having manhood ensures everything. Manhood is a key in my life that I haven't quite grabbed. It still floats around me even though I may be 18 all I did was grow older, but when I need to do is grow up. If I was a man I wouldn't be wearin' ALACO sweaters, and I would be taking care of my family and handling my responsibilities like a man would.

I have some manhood but I need it all, for the simple fact that without manhood how can I take care of Dasia Alexandria Griffith and put food on the table and pay the bills? 'Cause if I ain't got manhood then my baby & family will suffer, and I can't have CPS all on my back tryna take my baby sayin I can't take care of her. I don't need that. I can't pay the bills & feed my baby with these good looks. Well hey maybe for a little while but my point is I have to step up to the plate and handle my responsibilities like a man.

First a man has to have a job and maintain a job. Second, a man has to run a safe, healthy, warm environment for his child. When the baby need light, the light bill has to be paid. When the baby needs food, groceries have to be bought. When the baby is cold and the blankets just won't do, the heating bill will need to be paid. All these things fall into place with manhood.

And the third is education because when she get older and she start doing harder work and the technology gets better, she gonna ask daddy for help and when you keep saying "Ask your mother," those ask your mothers are gonna wear out. Sooner or later she gonna figure out that daddy a dummy so stay on top of your game and handle yo male responsibilities and trust in god and you gonna be ok.

And fourth is accountability. If you can't be accountable for your actions then you gonna have some serious problems. If you making excuses yo family ain't gonna wanna hear no excuses so be accountable for your actions.

Manhood is what makes a man, and to have manhood you gotta have these things. Accountability, Integrity, Responsibility, Respect, Patience, Trust, Love, Forgiveness, Honor and most of all trust in God. So if you ask me will I gain manhood when I leave, I will say yes!

-Sydy Bo, Alameda

From The Beat: What a great piece you've written. It's really inspiring! You've got a clear vision and good strong reasons to follow through. So here's the thing, it can be hard earning a living the honest way, but you CAN do it. So tell us your plan to start providing for your family when you're on the outs. You're obviously a smart guy, so we also want to challenge you to spend some time thinking about what's going to be the biggest temptation that might keep you from following your path completely, and figure out how you're going to resist it. That will make you even stronger when you feel tempted on the outs.

President

John McCain another republican
he'd rather lock 'em up and throw away the key
Hillary not too different then McCain
she won't make as good a president as Clinton
Barack Obama smarter then Clinton
We lost Gore Kerry and Sharpton.

A lot of people lost hope
but I heard a man of God say that the Lord will make up lost time
I wonder if the days I spent
smoking weed 'potes blacks and drunk
count as lost time...

And these sober hall days are my makeup time
it sounds funny but if you believe you believe fully
not just half & if you believe fully you believe God has a
plan for you and if you believe that you should think you're
here for a reason and it'll pan out

Barack for prez
if he don't win man
we will have cheated ourselves straight up

-David, Alameda

From the Beat: Wow, David - for your next rhyme, tell us what you'll do next time, because maybe for you God's purpose was for you to keep up with your verses - the more you teach us, the more you reach us, the more you speak to each of us.

I Care Who Is President

Yes, I care whose president, I hope Hillary Clinton is elected president. I think the country could use a female to pick up the pieces from the mess Bush has made of our country. I think it would also be good because women think things through and consider all sides and don't just act on things on impulse.

If I could change one thing it would be the cost of living. I would lower it because nobody I know can afford to live comfortably in California. People are struggling, having to decide what bill to pay this month or which ones are getting turned off. No matter how much income they have it's all going to bills and they are still going without.

-Stormi, Alameda

From The Beat: Stormi, thank you for your thoughts and insights. These are great points you are making, and they need to be heard during this election season and recession.

La Siento Cerca

Tenemos varios pensamientos como por decir el Día De Las Madres. Todos sabemos que es un día especial para mí. Cuando me acuerdo de ese día me duele porque mi madre está en el cielo.

Cuando estoy solo, me siento como que no puedo aguantar las lágrimas. Siento que me hace falta mi madre. Apesar de que está en el cielo, la siento en mi corazón.

Cuando estaba pequeño, no tube la fortuna de estar con ella, pero gracias a Dios he podido salir adelante.

Todo me ha salido bien. Todo lo que me propongo, Dios me ayuda. Apesar que no está conmigo, siento como si la tubiera en vida. La tengo siempre en mi corazón. Siento algo tan grande.

Cuando la gente habla sobre el Día De La Madre, siento algo muy extraño. Creo que tal vez en este día especial, me van a salir las lágrimas al saber que no le voy a dar un abrazo ni un beso. Les deseo mucha felicidad a todas las madres. Les deseo lo mejor del mundo.

Les digo que todo esto que escribi me salio de todo mi corazón. Son palabras que tal vez por no tener madre. Dios sabe que es lo bueno y lo malo.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho que no tengas a tu madre contigo. Pero como tu dices, ella siempre rondara alrededor tuyo porque este donde esté siempre estará ahí. Su cuerpo pueda ser que ya no esté contigo, pero su espíritu siempre lo estará. Ahora, tienes que tener en cuenta que si ella estuviera aquí, no le gustaria verte en este lugar. Sea donde ella esté, creemos que ella desearia algo diferente para ti que este lugar. La vida sigue amigo, y ahora tienes que ver por tu vida que es la que esta en este mundo. Lo mejor que puedes hacer ahora es ver por tu vida y por el rumbo en que la llebas.

I Feel Her Really Close

A lot of thoughts come to mind when we think about Mother's Day. We all know that it is a special day for me. When I think about this day, I get sad because my mother is in Heaven.

When I'm alone, I can't hold my tears. I feel like I miss my mother. Even though she is in Heaven, I feel she lives in my heart.

When I was little, I didn't have the luck to be with her, but thank God I have succeeded.

Everything has been turned out good to me. Everything I propose to myself, God help me. Even though she is not with me, I feel as I had her in my whole life. I have her always in my heart. I feel something big in me.

When people talk over Mother's Day, I feel something very weird. I think in this special day, tears are going to drop because I know I won't be able to give you a hug or a kiss. I congratulate all the mothers. I wish them the best.

I tell you this, everything that came out in this writing, came from the heart. These are words for not having my mother. God knows what's God and bad.

-Elvin, San Francisco

From The Beat: We are sorry you couldn't have your mother with you. Like you said, she will always surround you because she'll always be there for you. Her body may not be here with you, but her spirit will always be there. Now, you have to keep in mind that if she was here, she wouldn't like to see you here. Wherever she is, she might be wishing something different for you than this place. Life continues, and now you have care for the life that continues living here, yours. The best thing you can do now is to look out for yourself and the way you are heading.

My Mom

Unfortunately my mom passed away in October, but we just had the funeral on April 2nd. My mom was missing for a while and now they just found her. Bones. It was a really hard for me cause their wasn't anything I could do 'cause I was in here locked up. When I found out the news I aint gone lie when I came back to the unit I was like a ticking time bomb. Just waiting for some body to get outta line. But nobody said anything so I just kept it cool.

This mother day is awful I'm really not in the spirit. It's like I lost a part of me. People say, "I'm surprised that you acting like this". I guess people expect me to just start going bad but forget that. I'm trying to get outta here a.s.a.p. One thing I really regret is not being there sometimes 'cause I was too busy kicking it with my Mexican potna. I even lived in his house for a lil bit. My mom was a respectable loving caring mother who loved all her kids the same.

I miss how she used to beast up on the other people moms or older women I was having problems with. Like this one time when I was little I left my backpack sitting outside while I went to the store. Then I came back it was not there. Then the next day I seen the people next door with it. So I approach the kid who had it who was about my age. When I told him it was mine he kept denying it then his mom came out talking about, "my son found this, it aint yours." Then I called my mom and she said, "This is my son backpack. Ya'll got my son f**k up! Ya'll better give him his shhh back before there be some serious problems. She was a little tipsy too, so I knew if they didn't tell her what she wanted to hear it was go be cookies.

So moms was like "okay, okay here you go. I don't want no problems" After that I got my mom, bounced in a Camaro and I went to my cousin house. But the point is she always took care of me and I love my mom for that. I just wished she was here. RIP mom.

-Lil' Marcus, Alameda

From The Beat: Your mother is your best friend and one of the only ones you know whose love is for sure. We're sorry to hear that she's no longer here in the physical form but she'll always be among your presence spiritually because you are apart of her make up. Now that your mother is in heaven what is it that she'll like for you to accomplish in life?

Looks May Be Deceiving

What up Beat? This is your boy Lil' Two Three.

In the streets I'm a leader, too bad things such as shootings and other crimes are on the rise. On the streets a lot of people look up to me and I choose to lead them the wrong way.

I have some friends that will do what ever I tell them to and when it comes to girls man I can make them do the same, pimping them down, the whole nine. A lot of people don't like to hang around me cause I always carry a gun and sell drugs and smoke marijuana, but that's how people see me as in these East Oakland streets.

In my mother eyes I'm a nice young man who just hang around the wrong crowd and that's why I get into so much trouble. I want to tell her the truth but it will break her down because I'm her youngest child and only son. That's why I'm going to change my life.

First thing I'm going to do is move to Sacramento and finish high school and play sports and go to college and get a descent job to take care of my family and teach the youth when they get older to not follow in my foot steps.

-Lil' Two Three, Alameda

From The Beat: If you had a choice for people to respect you through love or respect you through fear which one will you choose? Are you changing for the respect of your mother or are you changing for the respect of your own self?

Growing Up In Oakland

Where I come from boys cry and daddies die. Over the past two years I lost more than twelve friends. It's hard to survive in these Oakland streets without a family with a good job or if you don't have any money. You don't have no choice but to grind because welfare checks is not going to get you through the whole month, so then you get involved with the police, and that's why a lot of us in here, or if you don't you get shot over a block because of what happen in the past, but even if you get a job you still live in the environment, so nine times out of ten you still can get killed on the way home or going to work, it don't matter. I got friends that got shot and killed going to a pizza place so it's not for sure that you are going to make it through the day or to the next.

-Tylee , Alameda

From The Beat: It's tragic, living in a place you don't ever feel totally safe in. It's also really hard feeling like there's not a whole lot you can do about it. Maybe there's something you can do to help make your community safer when you get out. Any ideas? First, we suggest you take care of you and get yourself on the good foot!

Forget Friends

Friends lets talk about friends. I say forget friends, the one you call your friend always say they'll always be there for you when you need them no matter what. To me that's a damn lie. Your friend ain't going to be there for you when you're locked up. You'll tell them to write you and they say they will. But as days and weeks pass by you aint got nothing.

Then when you get the chance for a straight through phone call, you call them and when they pick up it sound like they having hella fun and they forgot about you. And that's what had happen, they did. A real friend would not forget about you. All my friends are like that. That's why I say forget friends.

Think about it you call someone your friend but will they really ride for you? And what if it get to the point where they have to testify against you, would they? Will they be the ones to cross you in the end? Really think about it. And remember a friend never forgets about a friend.

-Lil' Rikki, Alameda

From The Beat: It is said you only get a hand full of real friends in this life. That's why when you do meet a real friend it is important to hold on to her/him. Don't say forget friends say I'm going to make better judgments with the people I call friends. Some people are just associates but not actual friends.

Mother's Day

What makes my mother so important to me is I know she will always be there for me through whatever. I could depend on her, when she says it I feel that it is genuine so it makes me proud. She also supports me and my need and also wants when it is appropriate.

She also is the one that brought me into this earth so I have to respect her for that. What I think my mom wants most from me is for me to succeed in life in a positive way. Stay out of juvenile hall and don't end up going to jail. I plan to do this to make her happy and also for myself.

What I plan to do for my mom when I get out is make her proud of me by doing the right thing. One day I want to be able to buy her the house of her choice and a Mercedes Benz.

-Detained Son

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a real bright head on your shoulders. You also have a deep appreciation for her and all what she has done for you. Just remember one thing- every time you decide to go to jail you disrespect and fail her. If you want to get your mother that house that should become priority in your life.

Hope It's Over Soon

I stay on my toes 24/7
 I'm thinking to myself, is today the day I'm going to hell
 or heaven?
 Kick it in front of the 7/11
 Got a new charge, a 187
 Head down to the park
 Met up with some girls after dark
 Telling me they want to go for a ride
 But this time I ain't doing a crime
 'Cause I ain't ready to do the time
 Head down to the 'hood
 We're chilling and it's all good
 The homies are in a good mood
 I hope this day is over soon
 Till next time, Beat.

-Spooky

From The Beat: We like the way this poem flows, Spooky, but we're confused. You say you picked up a 187, but also that you "ain't doing a crime" because you're not ready to do the time. How could both these things be true?

Only A Few

Rainy days and stormy nights
 I chose to follow out of sight.
 Lost my mind in just a night.
 But no regrets and no remorse
 for those who fall oh so short.
 Life goes on without a thought.
 Missing the world while I rot.
 It's two tears in a bucket
 because I got caught.
 So now I sit confined away
 lost in a daze
 of what could happen today.
 But it wouldn't be of any surprise
 because it's a trip how this world lies.
 No misery and so much pride.
 I think only a few could live this life.

-Trent, Santa Clara

*From The Beat: Perhaps only a few would want to. What's up with you Trent? That's a big brain you're walking around with. You show promise as a writer. That "...two tears in a bucket" line is good. When you going to wake up and start using your gifts? POW******

Happy Mother's Day

What's good Beat? Me, same ol' shhh. I'm dedicating this to my moms.
 It's crazy how a ninja come to jail/ the halls and really realize that your best friend is really your moms. Who gone cry for you when they try to slam that gavel and say 25 to life? Who gone stay up worried about you until you get in the house around two or three a.m.? Who's willing to get on the stand and swear to God and lie under oath for their baby boy or girl to get them free?

Who carried you for nine months and spent time in the labor room pushing out yo' big-ass head? When everybody used to be little kids, sad and crying, what was everybody favorite line... "I want my momma."

I guess it's just time to show dedication to moms. I love you moms!

-A.N.T.O., San Francisco

From The Beat: There is nobody in anyone's life as tight as their mother. You've captured the heart of the matter — from that painful birth to that painful day in court, and everything in between. Now, what's your intention about putting action behind these words? How are you going to show your dedication to your mom when you get out from under this situation?

No Next Time

Hey, what's good wit' chu, Beat? Ha! It's funny how I'm back here for a violation. It suck though, because I've been through a lot. Really stressing and can't stop being stressed.

But I know one thing, though. When I get out of here I will be a changed man. And even though this is my fourth time being in here, I kept doing the same shhh. But now I learned my mistakes.

Maybe I should've listened more to my pregnant girlfriend more often. I mean, I gotta tell you women are right and you have to respect that. And since she's pregnant, I ain't tryna leave her. Especially because she going through emotional problems.

But that's all I have to say is I've really learned my lessons. I won't be back here because I don't want my mom or girlfriend to cry and me being in the halls stressin'.

So I guess I'll see you next time, Beat. Be coo'. Oh, and I ain't coming back, hea? There's no next time.

-Mario, San Francisco

From The Beat: On one hand, it's very encouraging to read of your promise never to come back. But on the other hand, it's very discouraging to see that you're back here on a violation! To our way of thinking, that's the worst reason to give up your freedom, since it was entirely within your power not to violate. We don't know what you did to risk (and lose) your freedom, but we want you to keep this piece close (tape it to your bedroom mirror) because it's too easy to forget what you've learned once you're free to make your own decisions again.

All Over Again

Got out of jail and getting on the right track
 Next thing you know I'm going right back
 Ya girl stay bouncing call me kangaroo jack
 Lived in California I'm ready to move back

Man I gots to get away gots to get up out this state
 Only tryin' to get paid just getting by every day
 Was about to buy a Benz went to jail that same day
 Was hang'in out with my friends and got the' car took away

Girl you was doing so good why you doin' so bad
 You was out in the hood now you posted like a flag
 Police took everything I had, too bad
 But it's all good, 'cause I'm gone make it right back
 Take me down town you can't bring a pimp down
 When will they learn they can't turn the game around
 They tryin' to change me and the game
 but they can't do neither

And I don't' know why they so damn eager

-Da Bay Gurl, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: When you do get your life back on track and if you do move back to the Bay Area, be sure to drop by The Beat to let us know how you're doing.

I Care Who's President

I do care who becomes President. I want Obama r hillary Clinton to win because I know that either one of them would make a good President and help the community that have a lot of blacks and Latinos.

I just hope that either one of them helps the mothers and the little kids. And I hope that they gt the soldiers out of the Army, 'cause I got my cousin out there.

-Arnold, San Francisco

From The Beat: We care who's President, too, for a lot of the same reasons as you give here. Why do you think Hillary or Obama would do a better job than the Republican McCain? Do you plan to register to vote when you're 18?

Digging Out Of a Hole

Where I am today is the downest point in my life.
 What got me here were the choices I made.
 What made my choices was one thought-revenge.
 My thought turned into words; those words turned into
 an action.
 My action then turned into a habit.
 My habit made me who I am; it made my reputation.
 My habits, actions and thoughts were leading me
 nowhere.
 I was digging myself a hole;
 hurting people I loved and the people I hated on the way
 down.
 Finally, hit rock bottom and I had nowhere to go.
 Now I'm locked-up.
 It's taking more time to dig myself out than when I dug
 myself in.
 Like they say, "making a mess is easy, but cleaning it
 up is hard", and it is.
 What I'm trying to say is that mostly everything you do
 starts with just a single thought.

-Gregory, SEF, Maricopa County

From The Beat: This is a good realization you've made and even better than that - you've written about it which allows others to learn from your lesson before they. Too. let one thought mess up their lives. After you've made it out of this hole, what are you going to do to have more self-control? What are you going to do to make sure you're building monumental mountains instead of digging treacherous holes?

Runaway Love

My runaway love...
 Gone, never to be heard of
 Left me so confused
 My heart again abused

My runaway love...
 Ran so fast I couldn't catch it
 No mo' left, with none to match it
 Buried six feet in a dark black casket

My runaway love...
 It left with a single trace
 No fingerprints in this unsolved case
 My heart burning, as if sprayed with mace

My runaway love...
 Like a forever running faucet
 Ripped and torn right out of its socket
 It's too late now, ain't no way to stop it

My runaway love...
 Left me in this cold game
 It left just as fast as it came
 A feeling so hard to sustain

My runaway love...
 Bounced, without a single good-bye
 So I'm like, "Damn! Let's get high"
 Sad, mad, hurt all at the same time

My runaway love...
 Gone never to be heard of
 Left me so confused
 My heart again abused

-Miki, San Francisco

From The Beat: What a sad poem! If you were with a boy that "bounced without a single good-bye" then he happy it happened before you had a child with him, because he is a child himself. One thing we know about the pain of lost love is that it disappears in the face of new love. We hope when that happens, you find someone as mature as you.

Bad Dreams

Every night I go to sleep and have bad dreams - dead people walking in difficult scenes. Sometimes I can't sleep. I hear of different savages that I have to meet.

When I kick it with my homies in the day we make our enemies pay, but back at my pad, as I crash out, there are demons trying to take me out. Dreams of me getting shot. Dreams of me letting them pop. Dreams of me chasing them. Dreams of them chasing me. Hard to sleep because I'm sweating and turning. Visions of me and my homies burning. Maybe it's a sign that I need to stop. But I can't turn into a lop.

Bad dreams get me screwed up. In my dreams I tell the demons to shut up. But they don't. It seems to get worse. Maybe I'm cursed.

- Salad, Santa Clara

From The Beat: No, you're not cursed. You're just behaving badly. Change the way you live your days and you'll turn those dreams into sweet things. You need to start dreaming during the day - of the kind of life you'd really like to have. And then you need to go for it. You're a smart fellow. Your piece is well done. Thanks.

Use To The Bottom

Hitting rock bottom,
 I've hit rock bottom many of times.
 I've hit it so much,
 I feel like I'm dragging and dragging.
 I want to stop, but every time I get out,
 I turn right back to doing wrong.
 I see my family hurting more and more every year,
 I've been locked-up almost a dozen times.
 The first time it was funny,
 Now it's just sad.
 I'm going crazy, I'm getting real mad.
 I've got to look at this cell every night,
 It's pretty hard to admit,
 But I've kinda got used to it already.
 I've been here six years,
 I can't be here anymore 'cause they're kicking me out.
 So now I'll go to the big house,
 And they probably won't let me out.

-Carlos, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: We appreciate your honesty, but you're acting like a victim. You've "been here for 6 years". Why didn't you realize the consequences 5 years ago? We believe that you can still change your life, the decision is yours. Do you have what it takes?

I'm Sorry Mama

Mama, I'm sorry for the wrong I've been putting you through. When I was younger, I always wanted to do the right thing, which I was doing. I never thought that I would be in this position when I turned 18. I always thought that you cannot be in a juvenile facility at the age of what they so call as an adult.

I appreciate you giving birth to me and taking care of me and my sisters even while you were a single parent. Mama, you know my father wasn't the best man he could have been, but even though I'm in a situation, I'm determined not to be the same way as my father was. Even though he is a better man now, but I refuse to be away neglecting my seeds like that.

-Young Mari

From The Beat: So, your mom had to be both mother and father to you and your sisters. That's far from easy, and she deserves a lot of respect and love from you for all the sacrifices she's made. When you were younger, how did you think your life would unfold? What did you think you'd be doing at 18? Now, when you look forward (not back), where do you see yourself in a few years? How do you plan to get there?

Soul Seachin'

Soul searching for so many years and I still haven't found myself. Feels like a dusty old doll on a what-not shelf. It gets old. Or maybe it's just the pursuit of my happiness, and sometimes that doesn't even matter.

The deeper I find myself lookin', I feel sadder plus madder. Is it worth it? Do I keep on lookin'? Damn right! Because I know that one day I'll know the real me, whether it takes today, tomorrow, forever and eternity.

It's me, and that's how it's gonna be. I love my own damn self through my own holy matrimony. Don't give up because I'm in this life of such fiasco. I'm a soul searcher for the Lord, and that's the way to go.

I'm out. Peace!

-Bigun, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're a little confused by this. What do you think "finding yourself" will look or feel like? How will you know when you've succeeded? Maybe soul searching is your purpose. Maybe you've already found yourself without knowing it. Or, maybe the search is more important than the find...

Do You Care Who's President

I really want Barack to win because he is trying to end the war. It doesn't make sense for all of this money to go towards war and people in schools are suffering and not getting education.

Hillary Clinton does not care about people, and she is a supporter of the war. She is a hypocrite. I don't feel that they are wasting a lot of money on crap.

I hope that he will help the more chaotic neighborhoods and stop giving all of the rich people all of this money. I feel that he would stop causing wars and put the war money towards schools.

I'm tired of all this war on oil. We got a lot of oil in this country that President Bush probably doesn't even know about. He is destroying other countries and that is not right.

But I am happy that Bush is not going to be President anymore, but that doesn't even matter because he is unfortunately going to get assassinated. But that is the price he is going to have to pay because he has damaged lives and families. He even destroyed our country and other countries.

-Knhwy, San Francisco

From The Beat: What makes you say that Hillary Clinton supports the war? Actually, the plan that Barack Obama has to get out of Iraq is remarkably similar to the plan that Hillary has proposed to end it. (And who can say whether either one of them would keep their promise?) Still, we hope you are right that if Obama is elected he starts helping the people most in need and not the rich who have benefited so much under President Bush. Why do you think Bush will be assassinated? What would that accomplish since he won't be President anyway after next January?

Again

Closing my eyes, darkness subsiding
 No mental thoughts, distant faint calling
 Sounding good to the ear, appealing and inviting
 Voices of people, I open my eyes, white concrete
 Words on the door, reminding me that I'm confined in these walls

I'll tell you no sad story, or that I want to smoke a blunt
 So I'll get to the point —

I wanna walk in my home and be a family again
 Hug my girl and start loving again.

-V., Santa Clara

From The Beat: This simple poem is very moving. Your desire "to be a family again" says so much. It sounds so easy, but we know it isn't easy. Will you be a family again? When you get out from under the situation you're in, will you be able to stay free? We hope so because it's very obvious that you have a lot to give.

And I Call It My Life

I keep my flow gangsta at a steady pace

Expect the unexpected Mafioso based
 Trucha 'cause a mask can pass as a second face
 Blink one second too long consequences is fatal

A script can flip at any moment

It's a common story, kingpin turned informant
 Gangtask be stalkin' third eyes on the calles I'm walking
 Every other phone be tapped, trucha is how I'm talking

Belt hung on my waist, rag twirled in my hair

Competition is rare, they never act, just stare

Naturally Satanic like the wind of death causing panic

Barrio dreaming en mis ojos devil's flames gleaming

Heat steady steaming so loud the spirits screaming

My side of the town simon este jaina puts it down

Where hail drops with no sound like it was tears of a clown

Fallen angels all around dedicated is what I am to this ground

Determined is my mentality so sickened is my reality

Mi vato, my sweet dreamer the blood to my veins

One kiss from your lips silences the rain

The eyes in back of my head

The one who has my thoughts perfectly dead

It's been a long time and the clock's still ticking

Another day, another night, and I call it my life.

-Grumpy, San Francisco

From The Beat: We are so much more impressed by your skills as a writer/ Than by your boasts about being a gang fighter/ With your keen intelligence we wish you had already found/ That there are far greater causes to be dedicated to than the dirt, the ground/ If we could shake you into a new reality, we wouldn't pause/ And that reality is that you are worth infinitely more than any cause

I'm Sorry Mama!!

Wow! Mother's Day is coming up!! It's my first time in J. Hall, just got here this Monday. My mom is already missing me like crazy, as she says. Every time she comes and sees me, she will start crying cause she wishes when the visits are over she could just take me home. She's even more sad when she leaves without me in her arms!! I'm really sorry that I'm putting my mom through all this pain. She already has a lot on her mind, with her girlfriend going to jail, too. Now, her only daughter is here because of my mom. Some girl was talking about her, so I got into a fight with her. It was three weeks ago. With me and her girlfriend gone, she is left at home with all the boys.

My mom is a mother of four kids, three boys and one girl (me). When she was little, the doctor told her it would be amazing if she had kids, because she wasn't able to. But somehow she had four!! My mom has been through a lot when she was little and she is still going through a lot more! I'm really sorry for doing this to her, putting her through more pain, when she needs me the most. Today was also my court. They said they would be keeping me a little long. When those words came out, I can feel the grip my mom had on my arm grow tighter and tighter. I can tell when it was over she would just want to take me even though she can't. I wish so much that I could spend Mother's Day with her. My mom cares so much about me but sometimes I forget. I know my mom would be there for me no matter what I do, She will never leave my side. I love her with all my heart and soul!

-Monkey, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Monkey, your story has really captured our hearts. Your writing style brings all your pain and struggle to life so well. We are glad that even while locked up the Beat can encourage you to express yourself.

I Could Have Been There For Mother's Day

Every day I think of the day that I miss a holiday. But I never thought that I would miss my mom's day, Mother's Day. But I didn't think before I was holding that gun or selling drugs. I guess I was too crazy to think before I do things, so I have to go through this stuff.

But what's hurting me the most is mom comes every day saying things to me and starts crying. It hurts to see that, especially when she is just like my mother and father. She basically raised me my whole life.

Now I got to get raised by the system, and it hurts my mom 'cause she still coming to see me and still crying. But I always say, "Sorry. I love you moms."

-Grimy, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is the Grimy we like reading — down for his mother, the true homie in his life! We know it hurts to see you mother crying because you're locked up, but think of how much it hurts your mother! Her hopes and dreams for you did not include this. You have what it takes to pull yourself out of this hole and move into an entirely different space, one that will bring tears of love and happiness to your mother's eyes. The boy with the gun and the drugs was a child. The person who wrote this is a man.

In My Hood

The year was 1988, the year before my mother had me and my older sister. Also the year when all kind of crazy stuff began and ended. Life has gotten crazier when I was a kid but there is no telling how crazy it was back then. I've heard stories from my mother, father, and other people who lived years before I did. Only God knows how crazy it was.

Where I live is crazy, bizarre, and no telling what's around and goes around. It's like what they says "what goes around comes around", and what went around my way obviously came to me. I live up on the west side of Arizona, Glendale. Yeah there was violence. Yeah we had rivals. And yeah there was death. But it had all started when before I was born when my uncle and older family member were around my age.

I'm only 16 years old just one quarter of my life there's no telling what they've seen and went through. And with just a quarter of my life telling you all I've seen end done, it's like living a full life time.

-Andrew, Durango, Maricopa County

From The Beat: Andrew, we are thinking you have much more to say and that you are just wetting our appetite for more. We encourage you to continue to write from your perspective. We want to hear about what you think about the world around you. What can we learn, and what have you learned, from your action packed life?

Life On The Block

Crack heads askin', scratchin', beggin' for a front
 Hot boys hoodied up saggin', lettin' off the pump

D-boys on the corner breakin' off the chunks
 Stick-up boys watch the d-boys hustle 'til they all done
 Then they hit 'em up, tell 'em to give it up

They ain't playin', if he disagree the chop'll lift 'em up
 Ninjas talk about they can't get robbed... that's bullshhh

Put a barrel to his face and he'll give you all of it
 And the police hoppin' out, harassin', plantin' rocks
 Judge don't believe you, now you stuck up in them jail blocks

Just 'cause some crooked cops
 And snitches end up sleepin' down in a wooden box

-Gotti, San Francisco

From The Beat: You have real skills at telling a story (a tragic story), even though we had to take your line about females out (too disrespectful) and soften one of your lines about certain people getting killed (not ideas we want to promote in The Beat). Something that interests us is whether someone with your intelligence is able to use it to avoid what you've described here, or is escape impossible?

Did You Think About Me?

Did you think about me
 When you were running the streets

Did you think about me

When you were between the sheets...?

Man forget a poem, I'ma tell it like it is: he don't know what he had messing with me. I did everything for him. Walking in the cold at 6 in the morning to get him medicine 'cause he was sick. When he called me and told me he was in a crash and totaled my car, I didn't care about the car, I ran damn near three blocks to see if he was okay. I gave it all to him, he had all of me.

I never cheated, not once, but yet he told me how it felt with her. He told her he loved her in front of me, he kissed her in the mouth in front of me. He told me he loved me, that nothing would ever come between us. I gave up everything for him. I risked my freedom to be with him. But I guess she was better than me huh, 'cause she went out there and sold herself for him, huh. That's why he cheated, right. But he had the nerve to do it when I was in jail because of him. Even his own potnas tried to warn me. Told me I could do better, that I was too good for him. He didn't appreciate nothing. He tried to give my clothes away to the next female while I'm locked up.

I loved him. I deserve better. I didn't deserve to be beat on, dragged up and down the street, disrespected in front of everybody. I didn't see it before, but I'm realizing it now. I gotta do me.. If I'm gonna be with someone, I'm gonna be with someone who will treat me with respect. Someone who realizes they will never find another girl like me.

So you ask me why I didn't think about you. Well, there are all your answers. That's it, it's over, I'm through.

-G. Kuttie, Alameda

From The Beat: Right now, at this time of your life, you do NOT need to be holding yourself back for someone else. You need to see yourself as a star — you deserve to sparkle bright, not turn our your lights for someone who obviously has too many problems of his own to know how to treat you. Keep this piece and remember the passion you felt. It's not about hating him, but loving you.

Dearest Mother

What's cracking mom. Let me just say hi.

I hope and pray I never have to say goodbye
 Because the thought of that would make me cry.

So please mom, please NEVER leave my side.

You were there for me from the start.

I just want to let you know, I love you from the bottom of my heart.

You stuck with me through my ups and downs.

You always picked me up when I hit the ground.

I know it seems at times I'm not the best
 And yes I did some stupid stuff, I might confess.

I think of you when you're not here.

Funny thing, when we were together I had no fear.

I know I make mistakes, but I try and be what you want me to be.

I never told you this, but mom will you forgive me?
 Even we're mad at each other, I'm still your ride or die.
 I always get that jumpy feeling when we're walking side by side.

See right now we're not together and I hope you're ok.

I just had to get this off my chest and wish you a beautiful Mother's Day.

- Lefty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: These are some great rhymes. It is touching to read that you mom always stood by you, through everything. Be sure give her back even greater love. We're sure she would love to see you make the right choices and succeed in life. That's the greatest gift that you can give to her on a Mother's Day.

My Hurt For You

As my heart aches, I can feel my eyes fill with tears. I feel so hurt that my mom is hurting and I know there's nothing I can really do 'cause I'm locked up. She's been there for me through everything, even though some of those times I made her cry. I never intended to hurt my mother in any way. I love you mom more than life itself. I apologize for everything mom. You're always there for me and I truly, deeply appreciate it. I just

want to make you happy. You're my every reason for breathing. The beat that is my heart. My star that lights up my night, the sun that lights up my day. If it wasn't for you I don't think I'd be alive. You gave me strength and courage. You assure me that everything is going to be okay. You've been through hell and back, raising us the best you can.

A single mother working everyday and never failing to provide for us. You always stay so strong. I thank God he truly blessed me with such a beautiful, wonderful mother. You're an extraordinary woman. I love you mom, with everything - my whole heart and soul, my mind and body. Words can never mean or come close to saying or showing how much you truly mean to me or how much I care for you. I love you so dearly, mom.

-Christina, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You have so many loving words for your mother, but did you get along with her so well on the outs? Sometimes we don't appreciate our parents until we realize that they were trying to help us by being stern.

Grannies Girl

My Granny is my mama. She does everything for me, from coming to court to buying me everything I need. The only problem is she's bi-polar but I still love her. She's 55 but she acts like she's 22 and a half. She's my favorite person in the whole wide world. She does a lot for me and she's always there for me when I need her. She's the "best woman alive", I love her to death. I love her even though I put her through a lot of b.s. and she always tells me "don't never let them see you sweat" and to keep my head up. She wants me to make it and go to college and get a job. I appreciate my Granny 'cause she stays down for me. I'll see her at court tomorrow. I love you Granny.

- G-Boogie, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you for writing about your granny this Mother's Day week. We know a lot of grandparents are playing the role of parents out there, and we need to keep showing them this kind of respect and appreciation!

Mom

Hi Mom. How have you been? I got a letter last night around ten, last night. It was from you, and it was pretty cool. You told me that you loved me with all your heart and that you would never leave me alone in the dark. You have been with me from the very start.

I really want to see you. I look through my little window and stare at the moon. I wish I was out to give you hugs and kisses. I want to go home. Sometimes I feel alone, trapped in my cell. There's no way of getting out. I know my family wants to see me doing good. That's the only key. I will love my mom until the day I die. This stuff I am telling you are not lies. So, I will see you, mom, at the pad - me and you with the family.

- Young Taz, Santa Clara

From the Beat: Man, this is one beautiful letter. It's so honest. We hope you can see your mom again soon. You're right, the key is you doing good. So, do your best to do good. Life will still be tough, but remember that Mom will be there as you change your life for the better.

When I Was Young

When I was young that's when I was a thug
I had nobody to tell me what's up
When I was on the streets my momma was messin' with drugs
I was pistol poppin, my fist was rockin on these punks
When you think about it, that stuff's messed up
'Cause all I looked up to was my pistol and slugs
That didn't work 'cause I was blind to be a man
That's messed up cause yo' boy didn't even understand
A little while I sold a gun to a friend
Worst thang I did 'cause he gone kill another man
So I sit and think how can I get off the floor
A little while later somehow I found the lord.

-Magnificent, Alameda

From The Beat: As usual, you've got some great images, and the story you tell is painful and real. You continue to have some great rhymes. We think you could smooth out some of your beats if you wanted to make them more alike on each line more similar from line to line (we're giving you this challenge because you are such a talented writer, and we think you can rise to them challenge).

Time To Put That Pain To End

What's up with The Beat? This that ninja Mike writing out of the big dog unit. I'm going to write up on this topic I like.

What makes my mom so special is that she always there for me. It's some moms out there who give up on their kids if they not doing right. And it some moms who go have their son's back no matter what. That's the type of mom I have. She wants me to do good once I get out, and that's exactly what I'm going to do.

I been coming in and out of this place for almost three years. All that time, my mom heart was in pain. I'm getting tired of putting my mom through the things I been putting her through, and all the pain I caused her.

Seeing my mom cry hurts me, and she cries every time I do something stupid. It's time to put that pain and tears to the end. That all I have to say this week.

-Mike, San Francisco

From The Beat: We think you should show this to your mom, Mike. It will bring a different kind of tear to her eyes. And especially if you keep the promise you make to her (and yourself) in this piece, you'll see her crying tears of joy. You know you can do it, but only time will tell if you do what you (and we) know you can do.

Dreaming Big

At first I had small dreams.
Going to a local collage and just living day by day.
Now I want more out of life.

I want to go to a university in Texas.
I want an apartment and a part-time job
until I get to where I want to be.
I want to build my own house.

My father is a carpenter and can help me.
My sister's mom owns her own real estate company
so I'm going to ask her to be my mentor.
Just because I grew up in Oakland and am in juvenile
hall

doesn't mean I have to live in the past.
I know I messed up and I got a felony
but since I was under 16 when I committed the crime,
I'm able to seal it when I turn eighteen.
I'm not just going to dream, I'm going to fulfill my
dream.

-Lizzie, Alameda

From The Beat: We are so glad to hear about your plans Lizzie. You are a smart and capable young woman, and you WILL be able to fulfill your dreams if you stick with your plan. In particular, we are thrilled that you've identified a mentor who can guide you along the way. Having a positive adult role model is key.

Education And Tribulations

We all have a right to learn but that's not our main concern.

Most of our main priorities is to chill with our homies
 and kick back and burn
 To get so high that we think about how the earth makes
 its turns.

Or how much weed were going to slang
 & how much money we're going to earn
 When we should be thinking about our future and education
 And the things we go through everyday like trials and
 tribulations

Or thinking about who's going to be the next president of
 the united states and what going to happen to this nation.
 Or looking out for traps and what leads us to hesitation
 and thinking about Judgment Day,

God tells us all about that in the book of revelations
 But there is too much temptation and that's why we're
 caught up in the system and incarceration.

Yeah I'm caught up in the system but it's all good
 I can't wait to see my family and to see what's new in my hood
 If we had a chance to change our past most of us would
 But while I'm in here I'm gonna use my imagination I'll
 be sitting back on my bed with a cool feeling sensation..

-Espo, Alameda

From The Beat: What matters even more is not what you do while incarcerated/it's whether you have a plan for what to do when liberated/if you want you can go back out and let your mind get faded/from more of that weed that helped you forget a life you hated/but if you want freedom and the life for which you were created, you need to find a new way to feel good, then you'll know you've made it!

The Pain In Me

Hey, let me holla at you for a cool minute
 let me tell you what I need to say,
 let me lace you on the same game,
 sit back and relax,

it will only be a second of your time.
 Looking at you through the window
 when I walk the hall

you know how I gotta be
 with my nose up,

at night, I never put my head down
 that's a sign of weakness in my eyes.

Y'all already know I be speaking my thoughts,
 it's like 90 miles per hour
 it never stops.

It just keeps on going
 like the energizer bunny,
 ya feel me, I don't be claiming the fame

I let that shhh roll off my chest.

I got so much hate in me
 you wouldn't understand.

I cry myself to sleep,
 sometimes because the pain takes over me
 iust like I been fighting demons in my sleep.
 I quickly get up but all I see is this four corners,
 walls closing in on me.

I sit up and think:

Is this really happening
 or is this a crazy ass nightmare,
 that's never gonna end?

I sit on my bunk and think to myself
 is this reality?

-Lil' Ezzy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Ezzy, the honesty you unleash in this poem is powerful. Thank you for sharing it with us and we know it will be greatly appreciated.

Mi Madre

Hola mi nombre es Oscar y el día de hoy me siento muy triste por no estar en este día especial con mi madre. Nunca la felicité cuando estaba allá afuera. Nunca le dije, "madre, te quiero". Ahora comprendo que ella es una persona especial en mi vida, ya que es la única que tengo en este momento.

"Madre, gracias por darme la vida, y por tu amor. Recuerdo tus consejos y ahora los comprendo muy bien. Miro el castigo que estoy pagando por mis maldades. Deseo madre que siga viviendo y que estes conmigo en todo el momento en las buenas y en las malas. Te quiero mucho, madre."

From The Beat: Esperamos que ella llegue a recibir este mensaje, pero no solo a través de nuestra publicación sino que personalmente. Ellas también merecen saber el aprecio que uno le tienes hacia ellas. Cuando salgas, dile lo que sientes por ella y haz las cosas bien para que se sienta orgullosa.

My Mother

Hi, my name is Oscar and the day of today I feel very sad for not being with my mother in this special day. I never congratulated her when I was on the outs. I never said to her, "mother, I love you." Now I comprehend that she is a special person in my life giving the case that she is the only one I have in my life at this moment.

"Mother, thank you for giving me life, and for your love. I remember those advice you told me and now I get it. I am living the punishment I'm paying for all my badness. I wish you to continue living and to be with me through good and bad. I love you mother so much."

-Oscar, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope she gets this message, but not just through out publication, but personally. She deserves to know how much you appreciate her. When you get out, tell her how you feel towards her and do things right to make her proud of you.

Mothers Day

Not so tall and very sweet. That's just a little bit of my mom. She has been the most helpful person in my entire life. She's been the mom I wished and the dad I never had. I've seen my mom cry so many times and I never ever stopped to talk to her.

Now that I'm locked up and have had all this time to think I've realized all the things my mom has done. I love my mom and thank my mom for everything. She had my older sister at the age of 16. She had me at the age of 18.

She lived 15 years supporting the drunk violence of my father and yet she raised us with no complications. The man called father to me is dead and if it wasn't for my mom I would be dead. Thanks mom.

-Loony, Alameda

From The Beat: There's nothing like a mother's love. She's the nurturer, the healer and the protector in so many ways. She's God's angel here to spread his love. Never underestimate the power of a mother's love.

Barack Obama

I think who should be elected is Barack Obama, because I think he might just be the right president. Because of what George W. Bush Jr. did, he got us in this war that seems so impossible to get out of. Barack Obama might just be the one that could settle this whole thing with the war that is going on. Another thing is that a black president is what we might just need. Really, I just hope for the best.

-Lil' Joe, Alameda

From The Beat: Hoping for the best is always a good thing, but not too long from now you'll be able to do something more than that, like voting. It's great that you're paying attention and have an idea of what you want in a president. Thanks for your thoughts!

Does The Good Outweigh The Bad?

I've been sober for five months now. What a five months it has been. I still think being high is more fun. Then again, there are good times and bad times. But I leave it up to you to decide. Does the good outweigh the bad? Are you going to get out, get high, and come back? Are you going to get high and sell your ass?

I leave it up to you to decide. Does the good outweigh the bad?

-James

From The Beat: In your case, we'd have to guess that sobriety has been good for you. You seem more self-confident, calmer, more adult. More ready to be a man who inspires other young people to believe that they deserve more than what they've gotten.

I Don't Want McCain to Win

I think if Obama wins, somebody's gonna kill him. I don't want McCain to win cause my stepsister's in Iraq and he's gonna keep the war going.

-Dirty D

From The Beat: What is your stepsister doing in Iraq? Does she write letters home? Does she think we should leave? Do you think she'd ever want to write something for The Beat about what it's like over there?

Beat, Did You Miss Me?

I'm back!! So Beat, what's good? Did you miss me? Well, I failed my home supervision. But it's good, 'cause I'll be 18 on the 8th of June and it's a straight release.

Let me update you on everything. My baby is getting really big man, her little afro is getting really big. And I still don't mess with my baby daddy. He's sitting on 24's and candy paint, but my baby needs pull-ups. That's a sorry ass ninja for you. It's all good 'cause I still got my other boy. To all my locked up potnas, keep your heads up.

-The King's Wife

From The Beat: We hope you remember what you wrote here when that man of yours comes back into your life, trying to charm you. Do your best to get your baby daddy to live up his responsibilities! And stay in touch with The Beat, there's always a place for you in our pages and our hearts. Peace.

Manhood

Manhood to me is when a boy is now grown and has taken a big step into manhood, which to me is a certain level of responsibility, self respect, and independence.

To me, when you're on your way to manhood, you have to let your childhood go, you have to start thinking more about you, your life, and you have to learn how to provide not just for yourself but for your family.

To my understanding and what I think, a child doesn't have to work, pay the bills, or in ways, think for himself. A child doesn't know how to take care of a family, but a man should be able to handle and do all the things above, plus more.

When you're a kid, you have people there to help you through life and are there to tell you what to do and how to do it, over and over again. When you make a mistake, they are there to tell you that you made a mistake.

Sow now let's figure out a way to fix it, not saying that men don't make mistakes, but a man shouldn't have to have someone over them 24/7 telling them right from wrong.

-Lil' Mann

From The Beat: Do you feel like you are more of a man or more of a boy right now? Do you feel you are closer to manhood than you were last year, for example? How? How do you still need to change and grow?

Help The Ghetto!

Dear Mr. President,

What I think you should do is bring our soldiers home and help out the poor. Get the good people out of the ghetto, but to keep it solid, I think you can make it in the white house so you got my support 100%.

-Sweet D

From The Beat: We believe that if you committed to it, you could make it to the White House so you've got our support 100%!

Breaking Up

Well we've been living together for a year now. I cook, clean, and I hit your dreads every Sunday. I always supported you when you in every decision. I was with you when you had a car and when you didn't, when you did have money, when you didn't. I was with you through EVERYTHING. I thought it was true when you said you loved me considering all the shhh we been through. I stopped my life and dropped everything for you. When you needed money I hit the licks with you. But the only time you weren't able to do it, and I did it for you, how could you snitch on me? I thought you were better then that.

Now I see that as soon as it came down to the police, you saved yourself. I could have snitched and said you put me up to it. I could have got your for statutory rape and a whole lot of other things but I took the rap. After all I've done for you, how could you snitch on me. You could have said you didn't see anything, but its cool. I got my goals together and my life is going to be cool cause I got my family for support.

-Lizzie

From The Beat: We are glad you are moving on Lizzie, and that this man is no longer in your life. While snitching on you was bad, it's even worse that he had you helping him commit crimes in the first place.

Ma- For My Mommy aka Ma

When I think of you I think of the plan I failed to begin.

When I think of you, I think of how much our love has grown.

When I see your face, I see the pain,

When I think of how I have changed,

I think how I made your heart skip a beat.

Mom I love you, and I'm sorry for the pain.

2008 is a new year and I'm ready to leave the game I'm ready to complete my plan. I failed to see. I have one question. Will you help me?

-Brianna

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing this wonderful and positive poem on Mother's Day!

Help The Communities

I think Obama is going to help a lot of communities, but most of all I know that he is looking forward to helping our communities that we have here in Oakland ...because we all know just as well as others have good communities, we will appreciate if ours could be fixed too.

Because we just look all busted up, and I don't think that's fair to us. And I think that all our communities could just get some help.

-Jessica

From The Beat: We can't just wait for someone else to come in and help us though, can we? What can each and every one of us do to try and take care of our communities? Is it about cleaning? Is it about watching out for each other? Is it about voting? You tell us.

Back Again

What's good Beat? This is your girl Melissa. I'm back again wishing I never ran from Thunder Road. I was there for three weeks and didn't like it. But I guess I was put there for a reason. I didn't like any of the rules there because one, I couldn't have any contact with my baby daddy Jonathan, two, I had to be on a high level to get home passes, and 3, I didn't like a females there because she banged a different color than me.

So I ran on May 3rd 2008 at 6:30 pm and got caught at my baby daddy's house at 9:30 pm the same day I ran, because my mom turned me in. I just needed one night to be with my baby daddy, alone next to him, that was it, but I got only three hours with him. But if our love is that strong (which I know it is) then it's worth waiting for. So that's what we're going to do: wait. I love him so much. We've been together since 10.20.07, and he is really a respectful guy rollin' in a Mercedes on some dubs. And he is seventeen years old and I'm sixteen years old. Because of him I stayed in school, didn't smoke, didn't drink, and didn't pop pills, so that tells you that he don't like a girl that smokes, drinks, and pops pills. He took me to my first school dance on December 14, 2007 (that's the winter ball). I had the best time of my life. He always bought me red and white roses for each month we was together. I love my baby for who he is. I never had a boyfriend like him, and I thank God for him.

-Jonathan's Wife

From The Beat: We are encouraged to hear you talk so passionately about what you say is a strong relationship. You say he doesn't like women who pop pills, smoke or drink. What about women who are locked up? How does he deal with that? And you don't mention his role as father- is he a good father too? Is he there for you and the baby when you need it? And how does he cope when you can't be there for him and the baby when they need it?

My Personality

My personality is cool, I'm set to sit back and relax,
My attitude is feisty, but I'm somewhat sweet,
Real sexy and mean in a selfish way,
I don't bang I just claim ma block,
I'm 5'11" 107 pounds and caramel complexion,
I am an understanding, complicated, multi-tasking female

I like to sing and rap, I'm fourteen,
My nicknames are Lady Bug and Lady,
My real name is Brianna, I am unique and
My name is unique. I am a happy person,
I'm never down, and I love to bring
People's spirits up. I'm a fun person,
I enjoy my time and other's do too.

-Brianna

From The Beat: Brianna, you are a unique young woman who's also very bright and thoughtful. We hope you keep singing, rapping, and that this will help you stay positive and out of trouble!

Obama's Life is in Danger

I think that Obama's life is in danger if he wins, because this world does not want a black man as president of the United States.

If he is elected, he will be shot. I would like Obama to be elected because I think he will change a lot of poverty in the community. The president today doesn't really care about the poor people in poverty.

-Mesha

From The Beat: If his life is in danger, that just makes him an even better example of courage and dedication. We hope that if he wins he remembers that he needs to serve all his citizens, not just the wealthy.

Obama

I think things are going to change because Obama is African American, but I think George Bush is going to do something to the country or the community before he leaves the office.

So yeah, he might win, but if he does he's going to be going through a lot.

-Jillian

From The Beat: You may be right. Are you planning to join any of the groups of young people who are campaigning on his behalf?

Pop Tart

I love you, I hope you love me too.
I want you, I hope you want me too.
I did that, but you didn't do me too,
But I ain't tripping 'cause you still my boo.
I told you I loved you,
But you broke my heart,
Now I'm feeling soft like a Poptart.

-Dirty D

From The Beat: Soft like a poptart! That was a great way to close this little poem, we can't wait to see what you come up with next time.

Waiting

What's poppin'? Yeah this RoRo still up in max waitin' to leave. This shhh hellu weak. I need to cut. It's a lot of fake ass ninjas up in here. I need to get out so I could do my thang. And shine on everybody that's out and shine for my ninjas in jail. It's a lot of haters out there too so I'm gone really shine on you ninjas.

-RoRo

From The Beat: Waiting isn't easy, we know it. And you wanna do your thang, sure. When you get out, what kind of shinin' are you gonna do? Are you gonna work your program and really shine in a new way, or are you gonna shine on, in the same old way? Has being locked up taught you the importance of your freedom? If so, then you gotta use your own power to make good decisions to keep yourself free. On another topic, as we've said before, sorry to cut up your piece, but we are not going to print writing that disrespects females, and we'd like to see something different from you.

I Love You Mom

I love my mama. All these years I've been growing up my mom gave me everything I wanted. Not when I wanted though, but for sure if I ask I know it's coming. All my potnas be like "your mom hecka cool" and she is. She drops off and picks up me and my potnas at all the parties. If we come in drunk she don't really be tripping. I tell my mom everything, so we have a very close relationship.

I've been in here for five months but my mom still is upset like I just got here or something. She's mad but at the same time she's happy because she knows that where I am, I ain't using drugs, I'm going to school everyday, and oh yeah, I passed my high school exam, and I also can't get pregnant or catch any sexually transmitted diseases in here. So she looks at this place as a savior! When me and my mother found out I was going to C.Y.A my mom was like "don't trip, I'm gone do this time with you".

I respect my mom for that and I don't know what I'd do without my momma. All my mom wants for me is to be successful, to graduate from high school, go to college and don't have kids at a young age. I owe it too her! And that ain't too much to give her. I love you Mama.

-Taco

From The Beat: Taco, we are confident that you have the abilities and skills to fulfill your mother's (and your) dreams. Now it's up to you. Passing the exit exam is a great first step, and there's a lot more work ahead!

Moms

Dear Beat,

I feel sorry for some of my potnas moms that lost their son to the game, because once you make that connection with your son after so many years its hard to live without that person in your life. Also, some parents live for their kids to have fun and do things that they never got to experience so when their kids get chalked to the game it seems like they failed as a parent.

I appreciate my mom a lot because she stays strong in every situation. Even though me and my brothers have put her through a lot she's still here for me even though she told me if I go back to jail she wasn't messin' with me.

-Young g-weeze

From The Beat: You are right, most moms have a strong connection with their children. It is a huge loss when a child gets killed, someone who they brought into this world. Sounds like your mom has stayed strong through a lot of stuff, and she tried to set some boundaries, at least in part so you'd make better choices and stay safe. What can you do in the hall, and when you're on the outs, to try to follow her good example so that maybe someday when you've proven you can keep out of trouble, she might mess with you again?

Ninjas Smilin' Like They Want To Be Here

What's good Beat! Well I just wanted to tell everyone that if you in that hall and if you think you cool and thinking you finna get respected on the outs you stupid 'cause this shhh ain't cool. I just can't stand ninjas that wake up and see them smiling like they wanna be here and they always talking like this ain't shhh. Well if you that kinda ninja you trippin'!

-Kutty

From The Beat: You ever hear that expression "smiling on the outside, crying on the inside?" A lot of people just hide their feelings, because if you do show your feelings people might call you soft. Also, for some people it's so hot out there that maybe they feel better in the hall? Just our two cents.

Mothers' Day

My mom never let tears drop. She always seem to hold it together under all circumstances, even though her sons then put her through a lot. I love her to the death. She is a mom and dad.

-ABCg

From The Beat: You mom sounds like a special lady. Do you have plans to make any changes in yourself, so that this woman you love and respect doesn't have to go through so much in the future?

Is Moms OK?

I just hope that mom is ok because she just got into a car accident, and I haven't gotten a chance to see if she's ok. I have all my friends calling to check in on her 'cause she's my heart. I will go crazy if I find out my mom died.

She been there for me through thick and thin. I just wish I could be with her and take care of her. Top off the car accident my mom has only one kidney and she goes to dialysis. I'll do anything for her. I'll give up my life so my mom can live hers.

-Lil' Kev

From The Beat: You are facing a very painful situation. Being locked up when your loved ones are going through difficult times is terrible—not being able to do anything for your mom, or contact her, must really hurt. We hope that your mom came out of the accident okay. And we hope that her only having one kidney didn't complicate things too much. Please let us know how she is doing, alright? We are holding her in our prayers. We know you want to be on the outs supporting her. Your work in the past tells us you are a very serious young man who wants out and that you're willing to work for it. Don't let the problems with your potnas (in recent weeks) confuse you into messing up so you sacrifice what you really care about.

That Man!

Barack Obama... When I hear the name I smile. I seriously hope he wins. But it hurts to know someone might shoot him if he wins.

I hate to admit it, but if he gets shot black folks might not react with common sense. But I give him my best of wishes for November.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: It would be a terrible blow for America if he were shot, we agree. Will you be 18 by the time he runs? If so you will get the chance to vote for him!

Do You Care Who's President?

I really don't care who's the upcoming president. Because no matter who the upcoming President is nothing is going to change.

Even if the President is black the only thing that might happen is he's gonna get shot. And if the white lady becomes President then we will most likely still be at war and gay marriages might be more accepted. But there's still gonna be jails. It might be more jails in fact. Or more laws. So that's why I really don't care for who the next President gonna be.

-Shady T

From The Beat: Sounds like you're pretty resigned to the idea that nothing will change. We can understand that since living conditions, the economy and community violence haven't gotten any better in your lifetime. But let's pretend that one day you woke up and things had suddenly changed for the better. From your point of view, what would the world be like? What would be different?

Baby On The Way

In the hall ain't solid. The staff be trippin' all the time. I hate bein' here...I got a baby on the way and I'm sitting in this jail. I want to change my life around but it's hard when all you know is the hood. I go to court tomorrow and I hope I get out of this place. I think everybody needs a chance at life, but it seems like when you get into the system your life is all messed up. But I'm a changed man, and I just need somebody that's gonna listen to me and help me, but my life ain't gonna be hard. I just need to go home with my baby.

I just want to go home with my mama and with my baby mamma. I promise when I go home I will change my life around. I want to follow good ways and that's it I love myself and all my friends. I am gonna be home soon ...I love you Angela baby. RIP Tim Tim, RIP DoNise. RIP Joe

-Anonymous

From The Beat: We hope you get out soon, so you can be with your loved ones, especially that new baby waiting to come out into the world and call you daddy!

Do You Care Who's President?

I don't really care who becomes the next president because once a president is elected everything is going to end up the same. Yeah both presidents want to change the way we live, but they both are running for the same position so they are going to work for the White House so they will be assigned to do the same type of laws, or, most of them.

-Luis

From The Beat: It sounds like you don't have much hope for change, regardless of whether Obama or Clinton wins the Democratic Primary and whether a Democrat or Republican wins the Presidency. You're right, Congress does determine a lot of the agenda, but the President has a strong voice in how things get done. Also with their veto power, they can really control some things (either for the good or bad). If a President could make a difference, what would you want to see happen?

President

I really don't care about who is president because regardless the hood won't change. Where I live political issues hardly effect our environment because our neighborhoods are overlooked.

I would ask for the president to add more alternative for us to choose other than the streets. For example more sports programs, music studios, jobs, and more activities for us to do than other standing on the corner hustling.

- Rookie

From The Beat: We hear you. The hood feels really far away from most big political decisions, and yet the overall state of the nation does affect poor folks, which is partly due to a President's choices. Recession hits everyone, but it hits poor folks hardest. Imagine what it could be like if a President were chosen who made it a political issue to help out in poor neighborhoods? Now that would be political issue that came home to the hood. You had some great ideas for change, more stuff to keep folks interested, hopeful, busy, learning new skills. Anything you can do to make that sort of change, for yourself and others, when you get out?

Boy Behind Glass

All I can I'm sorry for being in here because of my mom coming to visit me in somebody else's old jail cell. My mom has the courage to come and see her boy behind glass. She the most special person in my life.

She took care of me and my family until I got old enough to know the difference between right and wrong. As you can see, I made the wrong choice, but when I get out I going to tell my mom I'm sorry for everything I did.

-Scooby

From The Beat: We can tell how much you care about your mom and how much she must care about you too. Being locked up really cuts up a family, but what a blessing that your mom makes the effort to visit and let you know she cares. Do you have any plans to make other choices next time, to make sure you and your mom don't have to go through this again?

Change My Whole Get Down

I miss my girl Rachel. This jail life make me want to change my whole get down. I want to get my life right and try to change. I mean I'm still gonna blow grapes and sip Lean but I'm gonna get a job and try to get my life on track, and get my life back to the legal route.

I can't stand this staff and being in these county rooms. I rather be where people love me.

-Baby Juice

From The Beat: Sounds like you not changing your whole get down if you are continuing to smoke dope and drink cough syrup. If you wanna keep your job, those things are going to get in your way. If you lose your job, you may be tempted to get off the legal route. We hear how much you miss your girl and the other people who love you, and you miss your freedom. So why risk making choices that are likely to land you back where you are now?

The Game

In time it hasn't changed

From block to block

Corners busy sweatin',

Adrenaline pumpin'

Watchin' our backs from every angle

The smell of bacon cookin'

Foes plottin' and schemin'

the players in the game, like chess

And after each night the players involved that survive -

We each are blessed.

-Kyle

From The Beat: The game doesn't change from dusk to dawn, some get locked up, some die, some move on, but it is a game of chess this gangsta life, and it's always the kids who get sacrificed, while the politicians and the crooks, keep the money and cook the books, so when it's done from dusk to dawn, will you be a king or will you be a pawn?

My Mother

The main thing my mother want is for me to do good in life, get a good job and stay out of jail and do right so I can be there for her and do for my family. She don't want me always in jail or posted on a corner tryna make a livin' off of weed and coke my whole life. That's why I love my mom 'cause she the only person who always told me to do good in life and she was the only person there for me my whole life. That's why I love my mom.

-Shayron

From The Beat: Your mom had good advice for you, and we see how much you care about her. But you must not have listened because here you are in the hall. Lots of other folks coming up have good mamas telling them right from wrong, but they end up locked up away from family and friends, not able to support their peeps. What advice can you give to others so they don't end up in the same mess you are in?

Obama

I do care whose president. I would like to see Obama president. The reason is because I would want to see what he's gong to do when he get on top. Another thing is he's black and I'm hopin' he decide to help the minorities. Also I don't really care because I don't think they gone do nothing.

-Obama 2008!!

From The Beat: Sounds like you are of two minds about this. On the one hand, you hope Obama wins, and you hope he might do something to help minorities. On the other hand, maybe you don't want to get your hopes up too high. Sounds like you do care, you just don't want to get too wrapped up, and get disappointed. We're hoping that whoever wins, they do some positive things for our country and start really helping out the people who don't have much.

El President

I do care but I don't care who is President, 'cause it would be good if we had a black president or a woman one. But it wouldn't matter 'cause I'll still be at the Y doing my thang with whoever as president.

But if I could say what I wanted the President to do, ain't too much to say other than free healthcare.

-Mackin' Nam

From The Beat: Sounds like the fact that you'll be at the Y makes everything else seem too far away to matter. What about for your loved ones? Will the choice of President affect them at all? Free healthcare sounds good to us—do you think Obama or Clinton would be more likely to do that?

Mothers Day

First of all, I got court tomorrow, so I hope I'm out for Mother's Day!

I only got one mom no one can take her place. My mama always been there no matter what I did.

Me and my mom's been through thick and thin. For a coo' minute we wasn't talking or nothin'. Now we back tight. We both workin' on our problems.

But yea I love my mom with all my heart and I pray I'm out Mother's Day. Although I think we should celebrate our mothers everyday. Without our moms, we wouldn't be here.

Mom does everythang for me. I wish I was wit my mom right now. I be missin her for real talk.

-Lil' Ken-E

From The Beat: You sound like you have a very real, loving relationship with your mom. You have been through a lot together: not talking, coming back together, talking about real stuff. We are glad you get solid support from her and we think it's great that she is working on her own problems too. That's a gift, to see a parent work on herself. We all need to do it, and we're glad your mom has the courage. We haven't seen you around the hall, so maybe you did get to see her on Mother's Day. That's a happy thing, but now: how you gonna keep yourself on the outs?

Mother's Day

Moms should always have a day to their selves.
Most moms are moms and fathers and have no help.
Mother's have respect for going through all pain and stress.

I think this day take stress off mother's chest.

Moms always appreciate their children.

I can't see mother's dealing with killing of their children.

I can't imagine having that feeling.

-Jamarco

From The Beat: This poem speaks to the big job many mothers have, and the huge risk of loss moms face when their children are so at risk in the streets. What do you think moms and youth can do, to try to increase the peace?

My Mom Is Special

What makes my mom special is that she the one that brought me into this world. Man I love my mom to death and no matter what, I know she here for me. I mean I do a lot of stuff that stresses my mom out, but she always lets me know that she cares for me and always wants the best for me.

One day when I'm doing my thang the positive way, I'm gonna make sure my mom has everything she needs and ever wanted. Because I believe that she deserves everything because of the person she is. I wish I was able to be with her this Mother's Day and all the rest of them to come.

-Chippa

From The Beat: Your mom sounds like a good mama. We like that you are thinking about doing your thang the positive way and that you're going to really work to support your mom. If you can envision what it means to do your thang the positive way, what would that look like? What kind of work or school or hanging out do you envision for yourself that will ensure that you get to continue being with your mom on each and every Mother's Day to come and not be locked up?

Freedom

I read that a man said: " Give me liberty or give me death".

What do you do when liberty is no longer yours. And death is far from an option, or so you pray. Time is no longer on your side. And now all of a sudden you want time to go by fast. Give me liberty ASAP.

-T-Rex

From The Beat: We know that you are looking at some time, so the only liberty you can hope for right now is mental liberty. Keep your mind alive, engaged. Read as much as you can, write as much as you can (and remember there's always a home for you in The Beat Without), and make your mind strong so that when you get out you can be ready to get back with your family as the good, powerful man you've always had in you to be! Peace.

I'm In This Predicament

What's good Beat it's ya boy Lil' Dave, and all I'm sayin' is I love my mom, and I will never do her wrong, and I will always be by her side, and I will always listen to her.

All the stuff she told me not to do--I did it. Well now I'm in this predicament where she told me I was gone end up if I kept doin' the same stuff I was doin'.

When will I stop the violence?

When will I take responsibility for my actions?

To the Y I go!

-Lil' David

From The Beat: Your caring for your mom is so clear in this piece, and it is also clear that she has a lot of wisdom. You are growing some wisdom of your own, too, asking some great questions at the end of your piece. We're going to let them inspire us as we ask you: What plans do you have to stop the violence? How might you start taking responsibility for your actions?

A Hard Mother's Day

My mom is in jail right now so she having her Mothers Day in jail. I'm still gone send her a letter through my sister. I love my mom, and I don't want her to be in there and I don't want to be in here myself.

-Magnificent

From The Beat: That hurts having Mother's Day in jail. Glad you are still in contact with her, and we hope she is working on her stuff in there so she can get out and stay out, as you are in the hall.

Anti-American

I'm anti-American straight up

You hearin' me

Clearin' me

No play what

Tired of these patriots

Waitin it's a fact no debatin'

You don't relate and it goes back

From telling an man creatin' commie rhymes

Who's ancestors is from this land before Columbus

Go back where you came from if you don't like the

country what! This my land not our land

Don't matter what you say either way it got stolen

Indian reservations penetrated for the gold man and the

coal damn. What would happen if justice took place and

more people started rappin'?

-David

From The Beat: You have strong political passions, and the skill to voice them in complex ways. Are you ready to back them up by dedicating your life to advancing the condition of your people... If so don't you have to start with yourself?

Do I Care Who's President

Yes I care whose president because we need somebody to make some good things happen to our community. Like make more schools and less jails, and more programs for young and old people.

-Magnificent

From The Beat: We like it. We know you're not the President, but is there anything you can do for your community when you on the outs?

Mothers Day!?!

My mother... I can't talk to my mother

She been there for me.

My mother suffered too many

Times because of my bad decisions.

My mother went from healthy to unhealthy.

See it goes like this. Since I was 10 years old

My life's been messed up and 7 years later

I'm 17 years old and still messin' up

My mother almost died because she was suffering too much

To the point where she almost died on me

For a minute I almost lost the greatest thing in my life

And now my moms is very healthy because

Things going good for me no and the judge is

Giving me one last chance that I can't and won't mess up

If I could tell my mother one thing it would be,

Thank you for being there through thick and thin

And if I could give back everything she gave

Me I would give her the world...

- Gordo

From The Beat: Congratulations on your second chance! What your mother wants from you isn't the world. What she wants is knowing that you are safe IN the world. How will you give her (and yourself) that?

My Plan For My Daughter

My plan for my daughter is to give her the best advice about men, how not to let any dude play her and for her to be this best woman she can grow up to be – and to grow up to pay her own bills and raise her own kids.

The plans for my daughter is to keep it coo', keep her head up and always use protection. No matter how much I love her, I gotta keep it real. Daddy gon' love you... but just always keep it real.

-Charles

From The Beat: How will you be there for her if you're in jail or running the streets? How is she going to learn to expect good treatment from men if she doesn't have the 100 percent attention of the most important man in her young life: YOU?

Trippin'

Damn brah, I'm tired of this shhh
In this thang for a 211, D hittin' licks
Snobby ass cops, I call the boys pricks
Putting a ninja in jail is what they do just for kicks
I got six more days to discover my fate
This damn government got me feeling like bait
It's like gambling, takin' a card and gettin' a ace
Rollin' 'em dice and sittin' in the judge's place
Make a wrong move and get a cop's boot in yo' face
Got me like an animal in the zoo, a donkey or an ape
The truth is no use... still get yo' ass crushed like a grape

Try to defend yourself in here and get scraped
You might as well strap your mouth with duct tape
These public defenders, all these ninjas play
Defend yo' case, after that, have lunch with the DA
Forget this crap, brah, that's on anythang
Shouldn't have pulled out that thang ...but I had to let it rain

Sittin' in my room, this boy goin' insane
I think I'm seein' stuff...
Haha I'm trippin'

-D

From The Beat: Man, you do such a good job of describing the hell in your cell and in your thoughts that we felt like we were there with you as we read. The corruption you describe is real – but the only way to escape from it is to change you OWN life, your OWN actions. How do you intend to do that?

Juvenile Hall

Man bein' here ain't cool... this place ain't the place to be in.

In this place you think a lot about what you done wrong and about your family. You think about what you gonna do when you get out and about what you gonna do best, and what is the best for your family. I know one thing... that when I get out I'm gonna make a lot of changes, 'cause I hate the fact about how I been missing a lot to my mother, and how my mother being worry about me. I'm gonna make so many changes that I'm gonna make my mama proud. so much of me for what I'm gonna do in my life.

The one thing no one likes but should said loves bein' in here so take my advice do not make the same mistake as I did, so you won't go through what I went through. 'Cause you would not like this place at all... you will be missin' your family and the streets. That's a fact.

-Terol

From The Beat: The thing that's hard is that – as much as you miss the streets, the streets are what brought you here, right? So when you get released, it's the streets you're going to need to avoid to keep all the other promises you make to yourself in this piece. Are you ready for that commitment?

Myself in Ten years

What's up Beat, this Johnny! I'm here to tell ya'll where I think I'm be in ten years. In ten years I think I'ma be living in a big house and working at a juvenile hall. I want to help people so they won't end up in the halls all the time. I would tell them my story.

I plan on changing when I'm out. I wanna do better not for just myself but for my family.

-Johnny

From The Beat: This is a good goal to set. Have you talked to any of the staff in your unit to ask them how to make those goals happen? What kind of education do you need to get to become a counselor?

I Hope I Don't Get Shot

I'm still tryin' to think what I'm gonna do when I get out. I know it's going to be real hard but I'm gonna keep thinking.

Sometimes I think when I get out that I'm gonna get shot before I can even start school. I hope I don't get shot ...that's what happened to my brother. I'm kind of on the lookout for people who have guns around me, so I carry one on me at all times. But soon I'ma stop still tryin' to make it peace.

-Baby Whoday

From The Beat: What happened to your brother? And when? We're sorry you are in a situation where you feel you need that piece for protection, but have you ever noticed how people sometimes get overconfident when they have a gun on them?

Rest in Peace Weezy

I miss you Weezy. I wish you was still here man. But I guess shhh just too real. We are trippin' for you bra. It's been a year and 5 months now. You know it ain't one day that go by that I don't think about you.

It's a struggle but one someday we gon' make it up out the hood someday. I love you bra. We all we got.

-Young Purp

From The Beat: What you write here is so deep – when you make it out of the hood, you do so in honor of all the people you loved who couldn't. What kinds of things will you need to change about your life in order to make this dream come true?

Dear Mom

Dear mom sorry for the things I did that was inappropriate at that time. Ever since I was young, you been telling me to listen and keep your eyes open but I was takin' you as a joke. One day I'll get it together.

-Devante

From The Beat: There's no better day than today, Devante – for yourself, for your mom. Reading this piece will make her happy, because it's that first step towards making a real change in your life, one that will make you both smile.

My First Time

I can't believe I'm in jail. I thought I would never touch this weak-ass stuff. I got everybody on the outs screaming "Free that boy Teddy!"

This my first time being in here and to me this is nothing but I will be sure not to come back. And to taco how you doing I miss you and I love you. I just can't wait to hurry up and get my time so I can pimp whatever they give.

-Teddy

From The Beat: How can you say you're mobbin' when you're in jail? And don't just tell us you're not coming back. Tell us how you are going to quit "mobbin".

Two Baby Mamas

I'm soon to be a father. I have two kids on the way by two different baby mamas. I think about havin' my kids so much...sometimes I wonder where they will be when they get my age! I pray every night that my two sons and myself can be strong.

I love both of my baby mamas but at the end I'm gonna have to choose one of them, but it's going to be so hard. One BM cool.. she understand I'm in here goin' through it. But the other BM just be stressing me out she just don't understand what I'm going through knowin' I can't see my son come to this earth.

But I still love her... I just gotta make better decisions from now on.

-Lil' Hell

From The Beat: What matters most is staying on good terms with both these young women, to respect them as the mothers of your sons. Even if you're not living together or still "in love" you must set aside any conflicts or ego-trips because the children are the most important thing!

Mother's Day Everyday

My moms want me to be good wherever I'm at. Good in health and good in spirit. She does everything she can for me.

When I get out I'm gone give her everything she wants. If she want it I'm gone get it. If I ain't got it I'm gone get it. I'm gone get it by any means.

-Mackin' Nam

From The Beat: Seems to us that your mom probably wants you to be good in health and spirit (and action) more than anything else. We don't think she wants you to do things by any means necessary in order to get her stuff. You'd be doing her much better being with her and being good to her than giving her lots of material stuff and you being locked up!

A New Age!

Yesterday was my birthday, and I turned 15 and I had to go to court and they was supposed to dismiss my case, but the DA and the judge started complainin', so they detained me until the 28th of May. Then I go back to court.

-Lonnie Bo

From The Beat: Happy Birthday Lonnie, we're sorry we didn't see this till now. Let's hope your sixteenth is on the outs!

Do I Care Who's President?

I don't really cares who's president but I do want Barack Obama to win. Because I think it's time to have someone black in the White House maybe things will change in the world.

-Jh

From The Beat: Have you ever heard the expression "be the change you wish to see"? What kinds of changes do you think the world still needs, and what can you do to help them happen?

Getting Tired

I'm tired of being in here.

It's hella fake people in here, and it's hella busy.

I'm gonna try to make top citizen this week. I'm out.

- Damani

From The Beat: What bothers you about people being fake and everything being so busy? When you're out, are things quiet and calm with people who are real with you all the time? Maybe it's different now because you can't just walk away from it when it bothers you. Maybe there's something you can do to learn to ignore that stuff.

My Mom

My mom was there for me since I was born.

I don't know what I've been doing with my life, but whatever mistake I did, my mom was always there for me. I know I put her through a lot of pain and sadness. There ain't gonna be no love like a mother's love.

I hope one day I can buy a house for my mom so she can live there without paying any rent. It was hard growing up even though we have a roof above us, we were on housing and welfare.

My mom was always there, always. I just wish one day I can help her and buy a house for her, so she ain't got to worry about paying any rent. My love for my loving mother is unconditional.

-D

From The Beat: Unconditional family love is some of the strongest stuff out there. It's great that you want to be there for her and take care of her financially. What other ways do you think your mom would appreciate you being there? Are there actions you can take or words you can say to show her you love her unconditionally?

To My Mother

My mother is someone I know will always be there for me. It seems like now that I am in juvenile hall, everything that she's been telling me makes sense.

I understand where my mother is coming from when she says she doesn't want to come see me in jail. I don't want to see her in here either.

I'm really glad that I have a mother that cares, loves, and is there for me, because most people in here don't have a mother or a father.

If my mom was here right now I would tell her that I love her and I appreciate all the conversations that I had with her about staying out of trouble and I appreciate her just being a mother, like putting clothes on my back and loving me. Thank you mom.

-Dj

From The Beat: Sounds like it's hard on both of you for you to be in juvenile hall. And you're totally right in appreciating the fact that you have parents who love you and are there for you because not everyone is so lucky. Hopefully you can keep having talks with your mom and keep listening to each other to keep that strong relationship.

Mother's Day In The Hall

What's good Beat? I'm gonna let you know how I'm feeling right now.

This coming Sunday is Mother's Day and I really don't want to be here on that day. I'm locked up and I can't tell my mom how much I appreciate her. I love my mama so much that when she visits me, I don't want her to leave me here. I pray every night that she'll come and get me from this place.

When I'm at home, I don't realize the good things in life that I have, like my mom and my family and all my friends on the block. What I'm saying is, ninjas don't really appreciate what they got until it's gone.

Right now, I feel like I lost everything, except my mama. That's why I love and miss her the most. It feels like she's the only person I got. That's why when I get released, my mama is gonna always be first in my life before the rest of my breezies. My mama will always be with me because she is a part of me. Her name will be on my neck till I die.

-Lil' Sambo

From The Beat: You've got a lot of love going on for your mother, which is really great. Maybe if you can keep these thoughts in your head, once you're out, keep appreciating your mom, you can find a way to stay out.

Mother Expects More

My mother really expects more from me, and when she found out that I was in jail, she was crushed because she didn't know what was happening to me.

We were separated three years ago, I came here to the U.S. from the Philippines and I haven't seen my mom for three years because she had some immigration problems. Every time she asks me what I am doing and how my going to school is doing, I always tell her that everything's alright, but I know that everything is not alright. Now she's mad at me because I didn't tell her the truth, damn.

-Michael

From The Beat: It's hard to find out from someone you love that they're not ok when they keep telling you they are. Do you think you would be mad if you were in her position? If you had told your mom things weren't working, maybe she could've done something to help you out, that's what she's there for. What do you think would have happened?

Hillary Clinton

I would like that Hillary Clinton could be the president because she is willing to help the immigrants get their papers so they can have good jobs and not worry about getting fired because they don't have papers! I do care that Hillary Clinton gets elected as president because she's the only one that's willing to help immigrants get papers. I hope if the new president Hillary Clinton gets elected, she would do some changes and help the poor and the immigrants.

-Ricardo

From The Beat: That's a really important issue with this election. It's great that you have a strong opinion about it, and that you're paying some attention to the candidates and making an informed decision about who you would want to vote for. It won't be too long until you can take these opinions of yours and put them into action by voting yourself!

Do You Cares Who's

No! I don't cares whose president because they don't do nothing for me. I want Barrack Obama to be president because he will be the first black president and he seems like he can be a great president.

-Obama for Prez

From The Beat: You should care about who's the president in your country. But then again you're right 'cause it may seem like the president doesn't do anything for you. But he might be able to do something for your mom, or grandma, or someone else you know.

Mother's Day

My mother has always been there for me for my best of times to my worst of times, no matter what I get into. Even when I go to jail she writes me letters, even when she comes to see me on the regular, she is always pushing me to do better, but I've never really caught on as to why she always repeats what she told me a week before...maybe because I "was" hard headed and wanted to learn from my own mistakes, but now I'm gonna always listen and take in what she has to say instead of letting it pass through my head.

I have a lot to do when I get out. Knowing now I have a baby on the way, I'm tryna do right and get this money and go to school and come back and work for the juvenile hall myself, educating these kids on life. I love my mother 1st. Happy Mother's Day!

-J-Bear

From The Beat: This is a really nice, heartfelt piece. It's an awesome plan you have, getting your education so one day you can come back and help other kids in similar situations. Just keep on listening to your mom and yourself and you'll find a way to get there.

Sad Day

March 14, 2007 1:23 am my potna Malo aka Lowkey took himself away with a bullet.

-Pained

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that. If you need anyone to talk to you know you can count on us.

Quit Hating

Look ninja quit hatin',
say ninjas, stop hatin'.

I'm bout chetta, these ninjas ain't on my level,

- Damani

From The Beat: We cut this piece, sorry. We expect big things from you and this piece wasn't the one! Tell us, what changes can you make to do right by you? It's never too late to make those steps. Maybe if you stop spending so much time around violence you can get yourself on a better path. Take those courageous steps!

I'm Too Smooth

Couldn't wait to get mo' shhh,
Young Pill keep it so street hun.

We been doing this for a while but it ain't sleep time,
Gotta rob us a bank about two or three times,

We flying cloud nine,

Whoever figure we poppin',

It be me in an old drop and the rims don't stop

Yeah a ninja came up 60,000 on the watch

Got ninjas still stuck and a ninja ain't forgot

a lot of ninjas getting shot,

I ain't 15 yet I still keep this one

And if you got love for them watch yo' ninja

'cause you could let 'em slip,

I tell you this you done miss 'em

I love old girl but been a minute since I kissed her,
but she keep it real so knowing her she ain't tripping,

slowed up on drankin',

I don't get too tipsy 'cause being off guard and being
hard is too risky,

ask me what I want out of life, be specific:

money, power, my ninjas.

Yeah that would be terrific but it's really just a dream,
that's why I'm just living,

ya'll minds too little to even feel what I'm spitting,

ya'll haters would kill to be sitting where I'm sitting,

I'm just so real that's how spitting how I'm getting

say what you want but money talks, stop whispering

I'm too smooth!!

-Lil' Darrell

From The Beat: Seems to be a lot of bragging and fluff in this rant/rap. What's really going on with you? What do you really feel and think about your life and all the stuff going on around you? Next time give us something a little more real?

Fallen Homie

It is hard to get through a day when you know that there is funk in your hood. I had talked to my homie the other day and he told me my homie got killed.

It was hard for me at first but after a couple days I realized its life and you're going to go one way or another. All right then Beat I'm out.

-Chuco

From The Beat: What's all the funk about in yo' hood. A color, a set, what is it? You make the funk happen. Funk doesn't just fall out the sky? People create it, whether it be from two people escalating, taking shhh to another level, or your brother and sister. But why does it have to escalate to the point where somebody has to die? Whatever happened to at least going at it fist for fist, or talking things out?

A Caring President

I do care whose president. I say this because I would like a strong president who would want to better America who cares about the citizens.

-Cameron

From The Beat: Those are important qualities to have in a president, which can be hard to find sometimes. Do you think any of the candidates for this year's election have those qualities? You'll be old enough to vote not too far in the future, so maybe now's a good time to start really paying attention to this stuff!

Sad But True Story

He was only fifteen when he got jump in the neighborhood gang Slanging and doing dope, mind was never clear

Went to get him self a tattoo tear

Making vatos bleed for disrespecting his set

The older homies gave him a strap he didn't have no fear

Always disrespecting his mother

And even taking money from her

Till he got caught up with a strap facing triple homicide

Now he's doing 25 to life

And that's life in the game.

-Danny

From The Beat: A man with no guidance or direction will eventually become crossed up in a game that'll take advantage of anything that's unbalanced. One must know his place in this life or he will find himself trying to steal a place that doesn't belong to him. Can you further elaborate the lesson you learned from this man's story?

Disappointed Her

My mom is very important to me and I'm disappointed that I'll be in here and not celebrating with her. I'll use this time to realize my mistakes and learn from them. What makes her special is that she cares and she shows tough love. My mom wants me to go to school, come in the house early, and respect her rules. If I would have followed these simple rules I wouldn't be here. All those late nights me not telling her where I'm at backfired on me and now I won't be able to be with my mom for this special day. When I get out I'm going to treat my mom like the queen she is.

-Fred

From The Beat: Sounds like you care a lot about your mom. Listening to her and respecting her rules are great ways to show her that. If she's there for you, and it sounds like she is, then you should be there for her too.

Doing My Time Mane!

Hey, what's good, Beat? This yo boy Young Snoops from Oakland again, dropping by with some few lines.

Well I'm still up in here in these halls waiting to see what placement they bout to put me in, since I got kicked out of camp and shhh. Well, I got slapped with a C.O.P. and supervisors here trying to drop gang enhancement charges on me for some dumb shhh. Well I'm mad because I heard a homie 'bout to do at least five years... well I'm just 'bout to do my time because a lot of shhh been going on since I've been down, and I've been down since November 1, 2007, but I'm not trippin', a ninja did the crime so I'm gonna do the time and not stress, feel me, I'm gonna keep it solid. I'm out.

-Lil' Snoop

From The Beat: You've been in the hall for a little while now so it's totally understandable that the thought of being in the hall for 5 years makes you really mad. You don't want to be where you are for that long, so maybe you need to find yourself a plan to keep yourself outside once you get released. You don't have to worry about it if you just follow the rules.

Bangin' All Day

They call me lil nacho

I be all about my cheese

Ah ninja should know not to fudge with me

Kicking back on the block

With a mug on my face

-Lil' Nacho

From The Beat: Is banging all day, waiting to shoot someone and having a bad attitude the acts of character that get you respect. What is it that makes a man hardcore? Not what you wrote.

I Care Who's President

I care who's president cause the president makes all the decisions and choices. The president can lower taxes and all that like gas prices and stuff.

But the president we got right now is boo boo and we need a better one. The president we got right now is just greedy he don't care bout people in Iraq he just wants oil and money.

-Andrew

From The Beat: If you had the sole authority to choose who's the next president who would you choose, Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, John McCain or Ralph Nader? What would be your first request to this chosen president of yours?

Life

Life is hard for ninjas these days.

We got to get money.

Without money you can't live.

And it's even harder for young people

'cause you not old enough to get a job.

Most kids don't ask they momma for money.

Ninjas like me don't.

My uncle taught me it was rude to ask my momma for money

so I never did.

-Alone

From The Beat: Life is hard for everybody nowadays. The economy is bad, and too much murder is taking beautiful young lives away. But you know something? You can make life easier, or harder on yourself. And money ain't everything. You choose what kind of life you wanna live.

What I Feel About Changes

Well I really don't know nothing about a president but I think Obama should be a president because that's the 1st black president that I've seen or heard of. That's the most I can say about a president of the United States of America...If I had a chance to change anything in the hood I will bring all of my family and friends back from death. Plus, I will tell the chief of OPD to stop harassing people for nothing in Oakland.

Now talking about Mother's Day. I think of my mom special in all different ways 1st come 1st if it wasn't for her I wouldn't be here right now, as we speak. 2nd I love her more than anything in the world, even money. She really wants me to stay out of trouble and go to school plus get my high school diploma and degree. I plan to do the best I can do just for her and because I feel I put her through too much already and that's all I have to tell about my mother.

-Pomell

From The Beat: Who do you think will have more of an impact, the first black president or the first woman president? Do you think the O.R.D or any other police organization will stop harassing those coming from the less fortunate areas of life. What are some of your ideas to fight back against these harassments without anyone being harmed or disrespected? What kind of degree are you going to graduate with for your mother?

Lock Up

What's up Beat? I'm in the same place. But I did leave my placement. Being in here is getting to me. I'm wondering if my girl is thinking of me, wondering if my boys are out there holding it down. But what is killing me inside is that Mother's Day is on Sunday.

-Gone Bad Reese

From The Beat: Maybe something you could do for your mom is to make sure to be there with her next year on Mother's Day. It's hard being away, wondering what's going on back home without you. Sometimes all you can do is wait patiently and make the most of things in your future.

Not Too Mad

Well this is my very first Mother's Day that I am away from her! But I don't think she is too mad or sad because it isn't like this is my first time in Alameda county juvenile hall.

This is my 5th time. Well it doesn't feel right for me to be locked up for this day for my mom. Well I guess I'm out. Thanks Beat. late.

-Lil' S

From The Beat: It shouldn't feel right being locked up on Mother's Day. You should be with your mom, but what can you do now. All you can do is focus on staying positive, and when you get out make sure that you don't miss another one!

One Year From Now

I see myself riding down the street in a Cadillac on 24's.

I also see myself chilling on a block that is rolling and can't nobody say nothing cause they know that I run my town. I see all my potnas eating hard- some eating harder than others but its good though 'cause we all folks.

-Young B

From The Beat: It's nothing wrong with dreaming as long as you're able to distinguish between reality and fiction. The world is larger than just a block, if you were to see yourself in the job force a year from now who would you be and what would you be doing? What you running in a dead-end street! Look where you sit tonight. Don't be the fool!

Mother's Day

What makes my mom special is that she keeps it real. She always made me keep it real. She brought me in the world and she can take me out. She has the most love in my family, even more than my dad.

She can be hella strict, and then sometimes she can be cool like an older friend. She plays Madden and Hoop with me. She can beat me in pool and Chess and Spades.

What I'm gone do is make my momma proud and make that money and then break my moms off with some cheddar, but I can never pay her enough back.

My mom stay on top of her game. She don't got no man and she still maintaining a three story house by herself. She don't always come see me, but I don't be mad at her for that 'cause she be workin' hella overtime. When I get wealthy she gone be the first pockets I'm gonna hit so she can be living lavish and laid up under the sun. When and if she die I'm gonna miss her dearly and my life is gone be hard.

-Sydy Bo

From The Beat: You sound like you really like spending time with your mom and appreciate her a whole lot, both for how fun and loving she is, and maybe even for her strictness. You have written several times about how you're gonna have a lot of money, and while we can understand wanting to give it to your mom to show your appreciation for all her love and hard work, we are wondering how you're planning to get all that money. We know your mom would rather have you on the outs than to have tons of money and you locked up again.

Confidence

Let me ask you something: Do you have confidence? 'Cause I do. I got so much confidence it almost makes me conceited. I know that I'm a gorgeous brother and I'm about to be wealthy if God lets me. But where don't I have confidence? It takes confidence to get out of jail and stay on track. It takes confidence to say what's on my mind, even if I'm right.

I have confidence that I can raise my baby girl and not fall off, 'cause the way I see it, I don't like jail period. Unlike my brothers I get it the first time. I have confidence that I'm not coming back. It's not that it's hard it's just really really boring. Besides, I don't like to be told what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. Unless I'm getting paid or doing a favor for someone, other than that I hate it. But for the next ten weeks, six days, four and some odd hours I gotta deal with it.

All that is telling me is this is the last time you do something, 'cause I can be out there makin' loaf right now instead of askin' can I dump or can I get a call. My confidence lies within me. So have confidence to tell your story even though you don't want to. I, Sydy Bo, have confidence in you but you gotta have it in yourself. One love.

-Sydy Bo

From The Beat: Confidence helps a whole lot in many things, but staying out of jail also takes a plan and follow-through. Sounds like you unhappy enough in the hall that you'll do what you need to do to stay out, but you gotta now lots of folks say that and still end up back in the hall. You know what you want to do, now what is your plan to make it come true? What are you gonna do to make sure you walk the walk and stay on the outs?

My Homies

What's up Beat, this be Spider from Hayward. I'm gonna talk about my homies. Every time I'm in here, I think I'm the only homeboy in my click in this bird-cage. And then next thing you know, one of my homies in here.

But it's bad cause if there's more of my homies in here, who going be posting it up in the hood? Who going to be protecting the hood? To all in here don't get caught slipping like me.

-Spider

From The Beat: You have to stop thinking about posting up in the hood and think about staying the hell out of jail. Yeah it is bad that you're here. What do you think? Police are gonna hit the spot as soon as they see you out there. If you want to stay out of jail you have to stop being hella hot.

My Thoughts

When I have free time I think about my little sister that died when I was not even born. I think about graduating college and going to the NFL to play football. I think about family members and friends I have lost to the gang life. I think about when my dad is going to spend a day with me and stop doing drugs.

I think about when I can see a smile on my mom's face. I think about people trying to act hard and look good in front of certain people but they know deep down inside that they are cowards. When I think about this stuff some of it makes me feel bad.

-Isaiah

From The Beat: Sometimes when you're in that cell you can't help but have all those crazy thoughts floating around in your head. But you have to let some of that shhh go. Your pops is the one missing out on a great son, not you. Forget about how other people act. Focus on yourself. Because you can't change anybody and the way they think but you can change yourself. And the first thing you can do to put a smile on your mom's face is get and stay out, and be a good son. Keep ya head up.

Happy Mother's Day

Mothers day, huh! A day for women who has givin' life in this world to every one on this earth. A mother, who loves you no matter how she lived her life. Working a nine to five just to take care of you, cried to see when you were born.

There are all kinds of moms, rich and poor. No matter what kind of mom, she loves you. Mother will go the distance for you.

No matter how I write this, if I win or no, I don't care. Forget the piece of the week. I have love for all my mother.

-Ran Tweez

From The Beat: Well, we're not sure what you mean by your reference to the piece of the week, but we're glad that you recognize how important mothers are to this world, and what we owe to them. Why not tell us a little about your mother and your relationship with her.

Show Them What You're Capable Of

Wha's up with The Beat? This Kristy. Just got transferred back from Alameda. Tryna get up outta here and go home. I ain't really learned a lot from being locked up, but I can say take advantage of yo' freedom because being locked up ain't worth it.

Showing yo' parents or the people you love that you capable of doing what you gotta do to stay home should mean everything. That's what I gotta do, and I'ma try to do my best.

But yeah, shhh, live life to the fullest because you never know who go be here then gone the next day. People getting killed messing around in these streets and people that ain't. If ninjas go run the streets or try to be on top of shhh, live yo' life to be about it not talk about shhh. Or live to be somebody, not just any average ninja or whoever just out here on the street.

Life ain't a joke and everybody know, so that's why I say take advantage of yo' freedom 'cause when you locked up you miss out on a lot.

-Kristy

From The Beat: You're right, life is not a joke. But when you advise people (and yourself) to live life to the fullest, some people take that to mean they should cram all their living into as short a time as possible (since they might not be here tomorrow). The problem is that some forms of living life "to the fullest" risk cutting that life short. So take advantage of your freedom for sure, but do it in a way that doesn't risk losing it.

She's Heard It All Before

Man, I know moms be hot every time I come to this thang. Man, while I'm in here, I tell moms that I'm not gone do, and what positive shhh I'm goin' do. I know she want to believe me, but she's heard it all before.

But when I do get out, I get right back to the block. She tell me I got so much potential and can really do something with my life if I put my mind to it. She tell me hustlin' ain't goin' get me nothin' but jail or an early grave.

I respect where mom's coming from, and I told her I can't make no promises. But I'ma try my best.

-Cal

From The Beat: Well, you say you can't make any promises that you'll change (for your mom), but you'll try your best. We think that is a promise — to try your best — and we hope you keep it. Your mom has lived longer than you and her experience is what she's basing her judgments on. Can you imagine how hard it must be for a mother to see her son going down a path that ends in prison or the grave? You have it in your power to make her much happier. If you use that power (by staying out of places like this), you will also make yourself and your future much happier.

Don't Elect The Wrong Person

I care who gets elected because if people elect the wrong person, I don't want a bad-ass President like Bush. I want Barack Obama because he's legalizing some things like weed. I hope he will make a law that says, "No school or you go to prison." And also improve my community.

-Gregory

From The Beat: What makes you think Barack will legalize weed? Most drug prosecutions are because of state law, and the President has no control over state law. What else do you hope he does as President?

My Love

Love do not hate. When I see you I hesitate. When we touch, I hold on to every minute 'til we meet again. To be away from you makes me weak 'til we can connect our eyes again.

I love you — your lips, hands, legs, tongue, arms, neck, and eyes.

Can I be the one to make love with you so I can feel your warmth? You make me stay up each day of my life. You make me see more to life. My love for you is untouchable by any man. They can't top me.

I have anger that gets the best of me. In the mirror in the sky it's you I see. I break down and cry because I ask why...

I want to hold you. Why can't we be? You and me are one. You are my world, my sunshine, my shooting star, a wish that came true. I love you.

I want to be you all trust me. I can understand since on that couch I said praying on my knees to heaven, "Daddy, I found my match. She completes me."

I don't want nobody else. No girl can take my breath away because baby girl you my main, and that's real yo. We don't go out, but I need you. Without you, my life is meaningless, boo. I never knew about love, didn't think it was real. But then it happened to me. God gave me an angel.

I found out love it is such a powerful, beautiful thing. I can't explain. I can't lose this feeling. I don't want to. I want my number one chick. I love you.

I hug my pillow and think of you. It's funny how you take my temperature over limit. Got to fan myself to keep cool. So many years I was in the dark, but then it's like you made me open my eyes. I want her soul to be mine. When we reach heaven, I want to still be married to you.

-Jarome

From The Beat: We took the name of your love out of the piece because we didn't think it was fair to broadcast her name on Front Street without asking. Finding love is great feeling (at least in the beginning), but you are a whole person even without your love. She may make your life more beautiful and meaningful, but she does not complete you. You're already complete.

Another Mother's Day

Another year being in juvenile while it's Mother's Day. That's pretty messed up for your mother. She's already sad that you're here, but now you can't spend a Mother's Day with her. I feel messed up 'cause of that. That's why I'm done coming here.

Every time I step foot in here, my mom sheds another tear. I'ma try to change my life by going to school and get a job and be with her on Mother's Day for she can be happy and proud of me and not sad.

-Mikeo

From The Beat: We think that if manage to be home with your mother next Mother's Day, that would be the best present you could possibly give her. And yourself.

No Tears

Please don't cry
I be OK
Mom, please don't cry
I will be there
I know you hurt
But I promise you
That this time I will change
I know it been a year
Since I been away

Mom, this is a mistake
I will be OK
I promise you
That this time I will try my best
For your love
Another tear from my eyes
Tonight won't escape
I promise

-Diablito

From The Beat: Even though you beg your mom not to cry for you, it's an impossible request for her to honor. (Even we want to shed tears to see you back here after being out for so long...) When a mother looks at her son, she sees all that she wants him to be — a family man, a workingman, maybe a professional man, a decent man, and a free man. So, when you don't live up to what she knows you are capable of, tears are inevitable. Make this the last time you have to make such a promise to your mom. Make this the time you keep that promise!

Staying Strong

What's cracking with The Beat Within? This yo' boy Sobolo holding it down for the block. Today I wanna tell you a little somethin' about staying solid when you're in the halls, especially for all those ufa's who are in the halls for murder or some ol' other stuff. I say that because I have seen a lot of people come through our unit looking scared and shaking in their drawe's thinking they're going to get shot in here or something. I always tell those kind of people to stay strong and be calm, but they never listen so I just tell them, "Forget your life!"

Ninjas think they gonna be cool when they get here, but there's always gonna be someone that's going to pick on you, talk mess about you, mess with your bedroll... Or somebody might set you up by putting something in your room that might get you in trouble or a new charge. For all that's in the halls, stay strong. For all the haters that's in here, "Forget you".

-Sobolo

From The Beat: Was coming here the first time more stressful because of these things? Have you ever gotten in trouble for what someone else put in your room? How do you handle it when someone tries to provoke you into doing something that can only get you in more trouble?

I Miss You

I'm in the halls looking out my cell window. It's raining. That's the tears coming from my eyes. I miss you, boy.

I went to court today, May 6. And May 7 is my 18 birthday. I hope I get out of this messed up place. I can't go back to the grouper.

I think am going to 850. Pray for me to go home and I will pray for you. I love you no matter what. I'm yo' ride or die chick.

Well, that's all. I have to go now.

-D-Gurl

From The Beat: We're not impressed by "ride or die" chicks. Too many of them ride right into jail or die while they're not yet grown women. We wish you would write down a plan for your success on the outs, and not just pray to go home. It's what happens after you go home that will determine if you can stay with the man of your dreams, or come back to spend a lot more time locked up with only females.

Mother's Day

I think a lot of mothers cry because it's finna be Mother's Day, and their child is in jail, and so they ain't able to get them a present or hug them or kiss them and tell them, "Happy Mother's Day." She go be mad 'cause she go feel that she didn't do her job raising you. I think that's shady, but it be like that sometimes.

-Lil' Cali

From The Beat: Do you think those mothers are only crying on Mother's Day because of what they're not getting? Or, do you think they shed a lot of tears every day that their sons are away from them?

Goin' To Be Back

What's up with The Beat? This that ninja Na-Na writin' about getting' out to mess with my ninjas because they always there for me. When I get out, we gone do our thing, B. But yeah, I supposed to be out in 10-15 days, so I'm juiced.

When I get to the airport and skate on my dumb-ass PO, I'm gone be back to the 'jets real quick. To all, stay up. I'm gone be out in 15 mins.

-Na-Na

From The Beat: We took out that last sentence, that cliché you're so fond of writing because, when we read a piece like this, it's clear to us that, far from you being all you got, we're not even sure you've got yourself in your corner! We hope this is an empty boast, because to follow through on this "plan" is to announce that you and the system will have a long and unhappy relationship with each other!

In My Sections

In my sections where I come from it goes down like it's a straight up war zone out there. I ain't trippin', though. I'm from the worst projects in San Francisco. I know y'all heard about these projects. Everybody did. How you going to be from San Francisco and ain't heard about the projects?

But enough about that. I'ma talk about me. They call me PTF, but my squad call me F. Banga. I'm waitin' to go to another grouper. I ain't comin' back here. I hate this place. But people in here is so soft, like talk all that head on the outs. But then when you in jail, with them, they all like, "Ahhh, I ain't in it."

Come on dawg, is you serious? Be for real. But I'm out this thing.

-F B

From The Beat: Being from the worst projects puts you in a difficult position, because if you keep doing what you do there, you'll keep finding yourself here, or worse. In fact, we like those kids who pretend to be tough and down for the street, but when push comes to shove, they decide they don't want the consequences that you're now experiencing. We'd rather you talk hard but act soft than talk soft but act hard. There are consequences for everything you do, and everything you don't do.

Mothers Day

Yo, what's up with The Beat? The reason why I chose this topic is because a ninja need to be at home with his moms fo' real. Like you her son, yo. She need her son with her to buy her gifts and roses and all the good shhh like that, ya feel me.

You in jail and moms out there missin' you and needin' you out there with her. Just let this be yo' last Mother's Day locked up like a dumb animal. Get out and get yo' holidays in because when I get out, I'ma make sho I stay out and get my holidays in. Bet!

-Bb

From The Beat: We bet that your mom would be happy without "gifts, roses and all the good shhh" if she just had you at home with her. Keep that promise you make to make sure you stay out when you touch down.

RIP Gully

Yeah, what's up with The Beat? This is your boy Ju-B. Man, I just wanted to say RIP to my homie Gully man.

Man it's so crazy how you was here one day and all of a sudden you was gone the next. But that's how the game go. From time to time you gotta lose one to put you back on your game.

But you would never be forgotten. I know you with your mom and the other stars in the sky. But that's all I had to say is RIP to my big bra Gully.

Ju- B

From The Beat: We hate the fact that you not only lost your homie, but that you accept his loss as "how the game go." If you have to "lose one to put you back on your game," the you might want to think about a different game.

Mother's day

I just wanna say it should be a Mother's Day every day because a mother is like a father — better than a father — and I love my mother a lot no matter what.

I always see my mother worry about me and my brother because we're always home late. I don't want to see my mother worry any more. I wanna see my mother very happy. I wanna make my mother happy by changing my life into a good life — go to school, do my homework, come home at the time she says to be home. But now I can't because she left me and my brother.

But I know she's gonna come back home, and when she does come home, I'ma make her happy. I'ma do what she tells me to do every day to make her happy.

-Geordi

From The Beat: We're sorry your mom went away, and we hope she comes home soon. But you can only be responsible for yourself and the choices you make. Not making your mother cry and worry about you is one very good reason to make the changes you say you're going to make, but there are many, many other good reasons too. So we hope you keep the promises you make here.

The Homies

What's up? It's me, Grimy, still up in here waiting 'til trial. But what I'm going to talk about is my homies from my 'hood. What I'm going to say is when I'm out on the block, they got my back like a backpack. They ready to ride or die with me. But when I'm here, they don't got my back like a backpack. Instead, they take the backpack off and forget about me. But anyway, gotta go. Late.

-Grimy

From The Beat: So, if your "homies" forget about you when you're locked up, who doesn't forget about you? Who is always there for you? Maybe it's time for you to re-examine the meaning of "homie" and give your loyalty to those who never abandon you... like your family.

I Am Sorry, Mommy

Mama! Damn mama! I miss you so bad. I am sorry for everything that I ever did with you or did to you. I swear it's now all coming back to me after all the stuff we been through.

I see that now. Now it makes no type of sense. So I am sorry. But I think you need to do the same and say the same thing to me because we go back and fourth. But love you mommy forever.

-Tiy B

From The Beat: Relationships between parents and children, especially their teen-age children, can get very difficult. But even when you say things to each other that later regret, that doesn't mean you don't love each other. This is a fine expression of love and regret, and we hope you show it to your mother.

Unite, My Chinese

The President is tryna kill all my Chinese residents.

So all my Chinese, we gotta unite,
Prepare to fight with all our might,

Throw out the white
Especially hen smoking my purple kush
Mess up Bush

While being so high and my eyes so low
Happy that Bush is gonna go

-Chinese Kid

From The Beat: Well, we had to change up your ending a little to make it appropriate. We don't think you were serious when you wrote this poem, anyway. If so, you'll have to explain what you mean when you say the President is trying to kill Chinese.

Mom Dukes

Man, there ain't nothing like mom Dukes for real. She will always be there for you even through rough times. Man, I been through this thing hellas times, and moms still with me. She's always ready to see me any day of the week, but I tell her no!

She know what I do for a living, and I know she often stress when I don't come home. But when I'm there, she treat me like I been doing good for hellas long. What I'm trying to say, Beat, is never disrespect yo' mom, man.

Mom Dukes, I love you to death! And you're always going to be my mom Dukes.

-Ni Nasty

From The Beat: It sounds like your mom has always been there for you, even when you haven't been there for her. So, now's the time to step up to the plate and find a way to be there for her.

Queen

Well, I'm talk about that one lady
That keep me in her belly
For nine months

She's a strong individual
Keep coming every day to my visiting
Stay true to my court days
Been with me in the good and bad days
Of my vida loca

All I got to say is that super powers
Ain't none against my mom, not even Spider Man
'Cause she always saving me from trouble

Well, I'm keep it short
Much love to the homies

-Shadow

From The Beat: We hope you know how lucky you are to have a mother who loves you and who stands by you. And we hope you can show the love you express in this poem by not doing the things that let the system take you away from her.

Mommy

Sittin' here bored out of my mind. The Beat Within...

My mom is hecka pretty. She hecka nice. She never tells me no. She has the eyes of a kitten and the heart of an Iraqi soldier. I love my mommy. She's always by my side. Even if I'm wrong she's defending me like I'm right.

The thing I think my mom wants most from me is to stay in school and get my money. When I get out, I plan to go back to school and get my job back so I won't have to come back here.

-Rikk

From The Beat: We hope you keep the promise here to go back to school. It's the key to a better future. What do you think will be the hardest problem you have on the outs? What would help you the most — besides your own determination — to stay out of here?

Yo, listen. I'm let you know

I'm sitting here thinking I'm goin' home
 I'm having crazy thoughts in my dome
 I'm sitting here with my homie Lee
 Stuck here feels like eternity
 We watch the sky go day by day
 Floating and trying dream away
 Locked up in a 4x10 cell
 Feels like a dirty-ass well
 Can't leave 'cause I'm in hell
 I use my imagination
 To feel like I'm on a vacation
 Trapped in my mind trying to find my destination
 Without no hesitation
 So I can escape
 But now I have to escape
 But instead I'ma wait
 So my anger and frustration
 Is building up my hate
 My mind went black in another dimension
 Now that I mention
 I feel kinda demented
 Also twisted and bented
 But I'm still stayin' strong
 Even though everything's wrong
 I'm laying with my partners six feet deep
 I look up, people starting to weep
 I her loud screams
 Oh, shhhh, I just realized it was all a bad dream
 I woke up full of rage
 Still stuck in this small white cage
 Just trying to be free

-No Name

From The Beat: Too bad you failed to put your name to this poem so we don't know who we're answering. You've written a tight flow, but we want you to use your imagination a little more. You say you feel like you're in hell, but we hope you know that this little stop is like a garden party compared to what the system has lying in wait for you. Time to switch up a few things in your life so that you don't have to experience real hell. You will get out of here, for sure, so you should be focusing all your thinking about what you will do when you touch down so that this is the last time here.

The Election

To keep it real, I could care less about the election. But if I was to vote, I would vote for Barack Obama 'cause he would make history as the first Black President. I think that he might get killed, though, by some racist-ass white people.

But to keep it real, think about how many of them racist-ass white people gonna get killed if they kill Obama because they have things against colored people for no reason.

-Drewski

From The Beat: We don't like to think about the possibility that an assassin might try to take Obama down. If that kind of tragedy were to occur, we think you're right about the violent reaction that would follow. We're interested in why you don't care about the election. Does it make a difference?

Bush Messed Up

I do care about who's President because George Bush, he messing up people lives and fighting over oil and old stuff that happened in the past. He messed up my future or the economy.

-Jordan

From The Beat: We had a hard time reading your name, so we hope we got it right. You did a good job of telling us why you don't want Bush, but you never told us who you do want. What changes do you hope the next President brings about?

Yesterday

I wish it was yesterday all over again. That's the only thing I want. I want to still be walking the hallway under my boyfriend's arm. I want to be able to eat my hot Cheeto puffs all over again. I want to see all the girls' faces that hate on me 'cause I got what they want. My man. I want to have my freedom. The freedom to do whatever I want.

-Camila

From The Beat: One thing you have that those girls don't want is your current address... So we hope that when you go back to that life you miss so much, you'll find a way to keep it. No one can go back in time, so focus on what's coming so that you don't have to repeat this experience.

Helping My Big Brah

I've been locked up for four days and four nights. Only got one visit from the pops and future step mom. I don't know when I'm getting out, but I ain't trippin'. Really, I've been on my own for these past couple years.

Yeah, I live with my pops and soon-to-be step mom, but whenever I need something, I can ask my dad to borrow some money. But I'll hve to pay him back with interest. I don't ask him for shhh nowadays because I'm independent. I don't like askin' for shhh 'cause if I don't get it, it just ain't good at the time. That's just how I feel.

My big brah wasn't really there for me because as a minor, he was mostly locked up. But now he's 18 and got out and is about to have a baby. But he recently got locked up. My plan is to do whatever I can so he can see his baby fresh out his baby mama womb. My big brah would do the same for me.

'it's fo' sholy finna be hard, but my big brah's lucky to have a lil' bra like me.

-Jeremiah

From The Beat: Well, we hope you are more responsible than your big brah. He's got a new baby on the way, but he still puts his own selfishness ahead of the baby by getting himself locked up. He needs to grow up before he can be a father. Maybe you can show him what it means to be responsible.

Deep Hole

What's good with The Beat? I'm chillin' but still have three and a half weeks 'til court, and I'm thinking about hella shhh. But

what just popped in my head was 'cause I just watched my football tape. I was thinkin' like in movies, ninjas that got good abilities, like in sports and school and shhh, how they always die and shhh.

One of the staff brought it up earlier. Ninjas that's locked up got hella potential to do good in sports, but it's always something that gets us off track.

Ninjas need money 'cause ninjas always thinkin' short term. Ninjas rather buy new J's than just stack up and cop a lil' bucket. Like me. I'm good as hell at football, but my grades ain't good 'cause I kept skippin' school to go chase money.

As soon as I touchdown I'ma get on my shhh 'cause ninjas is dyin'. My family keep gettin' they house raided. And my cousin got took fo' hella guns and 'dro.

This year of '08 ain't sweet, especially 'cause of this election stuff.

-Young Dunny

From The Beat: Well, it appears that your skills on the street have not kept you from being put in a box to chill here. Which means that we hope you do what you say you're going to do when you touch down so that this is your last unwanted placement. If you're that good at football, then you should be in school, keeping your grades up so that you can play. (We also want to apologize to you for misspelling your Beat name in last issue. Our bad...)

Dear Mr. President,

And now to the host this evening... What it is, Beat? This that Skip ninja broadcastin' outta SF county again. My topic for this evening, I gotta write the President and persuade him to change something in this country.

Well, I would have to change some of the laws. Some things are just hella unfair, like no smokin' in public. In Amsterdam it's legal, why not out here? I hope you can understand what I'm talkin' 'bout. That's just an example. We got people in jail for mistaken identity, people sentenced to death for nothin'. Something's gotta change.

-Lil' Skippa

From The Beat: Do you think a new President will change any of the laws that you want changed? Do you think the laws are applied fairly in this country? Do you think President Bush ever smoked weed? Do you think he'd ever go to jail for it?

Do You Care Who Is President?

What's up with the readers? This topic that I'm writing about this week is, "Do you care about who's President". Well, I care about who's President because that's basically our future. And if it's Obama, then I think life is going to be a lot better on black people. The reason why I say that is because he's black and he know how hard it is to be black.

-Rothaj

From The Beat: We hope you're right about things changing for the better if Obama becomes our first Black President. What do you think the President can do to make life easier?

My Love

Damn, how I miss my baby girl. I miss her sexy lips, her smile, her eyes, her attitude. Damn, how I miss her and love her so much.

I wish I could escape from here and just run straight to her hands and express how I feel to her. For me, she's the world, mi amor, mi todo te extraño (my love, I miss you so much), and I want you to know that.

Don't trip baby. You my honey bunches of oatmeal and I want you with me. But not in here baby, and baby please keep your head up out there and stay out of trouble...

Te amo... I love you.

-Creepier

From The Beat: As we've said elsewhere, love fills you with a fantastic feeling of euphoria, especially when it's fresh. We hope you get to spend quality time with the girl of your dreams, but you're going to have to find a way to stay free if you want to build any kind of relationship.

I'm Real

What's popping with the Beat? I noticed everyone always choose to announce theyself, but me. I feel like my presence automatically felt, not even on no cocky shhh. But for those lookin' for a decent message and claim to be leaders should know that, "a real person can never be knocked down".

Negativity is incompatible within the walls of this person, meaning they recognize the loyalty in the real friends and family they have, and only surround themselves with real people. Like the OG saying, "Real recognize real."

-Fresh

From The Beat: As you see, we had to change a couple of words in this piece because of how some of our writers use this word... We're most interested in reading a fuller explanation of what you mean by "negativity is incompatible within the walls of this person." Does that mean you have no negativity within you?

Mom

Happy Mother's day, Mama! I love you hella much. I ain't been the best son to you, but you been the best mom to me. I ain't showed my appreciation. I wish I could've did better, but I want you to know I'm seriously sorry.

You my mama and my best friend, and I promise to do right! I love you, Mama. Happy Mother's Day. I get out on Mother's Day, so thank you for yo' prayers!

-Lil' Skippa

From The Beat: Well, first of all, congratulations on getting out! What a nice Mother's Day present you must have been for your mom. We hope your promise "to do right" is backed up with real actions. Good luck!

Every Day Is Mother's Day

For me, Mother's Day is every day. Since my mother passed away, I pray that she can live better in her next life. I know she ain't proud of me because shhh I'm doing is nothing gotta do with how she raised me. I keep slipping to the side.

But I never lost my hope. I will be someone she wanted me to be one day. All I know is even if my mom is without me, she will be in my heart, and I will make my mom proud.

-Moe

From The Beat: We're sorry you lost your mother. That must make Mother's Day hard for you. But what you write is true, that you are still connected to your mother, and you always will be. We hope you can deliver on your promise to make her proud of you. When you do that, you'll also make yourself proud of you.

Mother's Day

It's about to be Mother's Day and I'm going to be locked up instead of being with my mom. I remember the first time I was locked up. She cried and she felt sad.

Every time she visited me, I thought I was wasting her time. So, I'll be in here until next year and it sucks because I can't give her any presents for Mother's Day, Christmas, or her birthday.

My mom is special just like any other mom because she's always there. We've been through a lot. Ever since I was a little kid, we struggled because we were dirt poor. And every Mother's Day I always remember and it makes me feel sad, especially this time.

-Bones, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thank you for this heartfelt piece. We can feel the mixture of pain and love you have when talking about your mother. Through this love, we see determination, and with determination we know you will get through all this. Keep your head up.

Getting My Head On Straight

What's up Beat? This your boy Dobb. I'm in here awaiting my date to be released from this hellhole and finally get back to the streets to get my program started and get on this long journey to success. And also get mentored by my boy (Brian- Sweet Pee), on how to live this life the right way so I won't fall back into that same bullshhh that life has thrown my way so far.

One love to all my homies. Stay up and get y'all head on straight. And that real knowledge to you from yours truly.

-Dobb

From The Beat: Sweet Pee's life should be a powerful motivator to change. When he was in the game, he never thought he could be shot in the head and lose brain function. He's lucky to be alive, and not confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. We don't know what you have in mind when you say you are waiting to "get back to the streets," but we hope the memory of Brian's consequences are not forgotten.

Mother's Day

What's poppin' Beat? This ya boy coming from that max unit.

Man, this the week, man, you ninjas gotta let mama wine and dine. Man, this her week to chill. Mama making her way up here every day fo' ya boy, stressing herself, wasting time when I could be at home to get her something. All I got her was a punk-ass card.

All I wish is that I could make her happy And go home to her. So all y'all out there, call y'all mom to tell her what'd be coo' fo' her. And try and make it outta there.

-Harden

From The Beat: Of course it's nice to buy flowers or candy for you mother on Mother's Day, but we know what she really wants, and that's you at home with her. So stop wishing you could make her happy, and start doing it. Which means, when you walk away from this, don't walk back!

Up Ta Par

What's good with The Beat? It's ya boy TheDude, holdin' it down at the Ranch. Ready to get ta these streets and do me. For all you who know me and feel me (What it do?) and fa you suckas ("Y'all know what I'm tottin!)but my topic for today is on y'all females.

I gotta give props where it's due, but y'all know I goes bad if y'all not up to par. If you don't know how to wash yo'self, then you need to step it up and get gone! These done with shoes y'all be wearin' ain't go' cut it! Y'all gotta be on top of y'all stuff if you expect to be ridin' in anybody' passenger seat. And if you got you own whip, you might wanna get some air freshener or just wash it! But this shhh got real old, real quick, so I'm go stop here.

-The Dude

From The Beat: If a lady weren't clean, you'd probably stay far away from her, don't you think? What about you? When you're about to hang with a lady, what do you do to make yourself clean and sweet-smelling for her?

We Straight Animals Over Here

What's up with The Beat? This ya boy Davey-D up in maximum security holding it down with the savages over here. But yeah, I'ma tell y'all 'bout a lot of ninjas in different units that be walking by while we in the gym and start to mug. I got one thing to tell you suckas. We straight animals over here, no actors.

-Davey-D

From The Beat: Animals act out of instinct, not thought. God gave you a brain. You may act like an animal from time to time, but that doesn't make you one. Instead of worrying about being mugged by others in the hall, why not use your brain to stay out of here in the first place?

Scary Consequences

Wha's up The Beat! Maine, I just heard a story from a special guest y'all brought. This story just sent some chills through my body. It's just crazy how he is lucky to be alive because he got shot in his head. He was selling drugs and he wanted to be like his bra bra who is in the pen. That shows how people take life for granted. That ain't cool. But if you wanna live that lifestyle, be ready to be dead or do time.

The game ain't no joke! I just wish I was out period! Let me go! Peace

-Wiggims

From The Beat: Yeah, it's pretty impressive to sit with Brian and see in his body the consequences that on one ever expects could happen to them. He was a tough street kid who came to the hall lots of times and thought he was invulnerable — just like most everyone in the halls think. And then it happened, and his life is changed forever. We're glad he sent chills through your body. It's not a joke.

Locked Up For Mother's Day

Its kind of weak that I'ma be locked up for Mother's Day... I know moms gone be super mad at me. But I know it's my fault. I really did her shady for real. If I could go back in time, I would change everything I did to her 'cause now I'm feeling hella guilty about everything. But I'ma make it up 'cause I love her too much.

But I'm out.

-Butta

From The Beat: Don't wait to make good on this promise. Guilt is only useful if it changes future behavior (in other words, if it makes you stop doing whatever it is you're feeling guilty about). None of us stays on this earth forever, so don't wait until it's too late to show your mother just how much you owe her and how much you love her.

Mother's Day

When I went away, my mama was left to cry. But I think that I'm doin' too much, and if I keep messin' up, I think I'ma either be in jail or in a cemetery, and I hate jail. So, I know I don't wanna stay up in here, so I'm finna do the right thing for me, my mama and the probation officer.

I lost my two cousins to this shhh, ya dig. But I'ma get away and show my mama that I'm a changed person.

P.S. I love you, Mama.

-Tray

From The Beat: How are you going to show your mama that you've changed? What are you planning to do that you weren't doing before? And what are you planning to stop doing that you were doing before?

40 Weeks And I Disperse

Yeah, man, it's ya boy, Lil' Rob, chillin an' shhh at the Ranch. I finally hit Level 1. Yeah, man, 40 weeks left. I'm gonna touch down and I'm gonna make a difference—nothin' but legitimate movement and I'm gonna make sure I'm gonna stay out of the way of the rollers. Until I touch down.

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: Congratulations on your promotion! In no time you'll be home. What kind of legitimate movement do you have in mind for yourself on the outs? What about getting a real job? What are you good at? What would you enjoy doing to earn some cash? What do you hope to learn from a job? What about a career? If you get into real, legal work, you won't have to worry about the police.

Music-Inspiration

What's good with The Beat? This that real ninja, Yung Chink, live and direct from the Ranch. I'm still holdin' it down to out there in them streets. Well, I am going to write about what inspires me in many ways—music.

Music helps me express myself in many ways. It's a tool that no one can take from you. Depending on my mood, that's what I'm gonna write about. You can say anything you like and no one can't do nothing about it. By writing music, you can make powerful statements and make inspiring music.

Well, that's me and my music relationships. It helps me stay out of trouble and makes my time fly by. Aight, Beat, keep it coo' and stay solid, 'cause you know I am, ya dig?

-Chinky

From The Beat: It's too bad you didn't get the chance to write about which music inspires you in what mood. Do you play any instruments as well as enjoy listening to music? Please, next week, write about all your favorite kinds of music and what you like to hear when you want to invoke dreaminess, sadness, crazy fun, romantic, all your emotions.

Dear Mother

You always had high hopes for me,
But as you slowly see
What keeps my happy
You see it wasn't school or a job
It was more to rob
Jacking fools
Breaking all the rules
Chilling with the homeboys at a very young age,
Drinking down my rage
I would have never thought I would end up in a cage
Ten years is what I'm facing,
And all I can tell you is
I'm sorry.

-H-Man

From The Beat: We're sorry, too. Ten years is a very long time to hand away your freedom (and you owe that apology to your mother for allowing yourself to be taken from her). Now you have to be the man you were not before, and face the music. Use your time to prepare for the freedom that will be yours so that you know how to keep it.

Moms

What up Beat? This is a young Chicano. I've been incarcerated since August 07. But onto the topic about my moms.

What can I say? She brought this gangsta into this world for a reason. But then again put me through hell most of my teenage years. But I still love her. Then again if I was out I guarantee I would take her out to dinner and we would be postin' back, reminiscin' about those days drinkin' and gigglin' all night.

Since I'm locked up it's like going to be an hour visit and when she leaves she's going to be sad again 'cause her monster is locked up.

-Monstro

From The Beat: We know, from experience, that every mother-son relationship is going to have its big ups and big downs. Just from this little piece, we can tell you and your moms have had some of your own. We can also tell that you care very much for her. Do you talk to her often? How often does she visit?

No Next Time

What's up Beat? As for me, nothing much, just chilling.

I'm writing about how I get out in a week and how I'm sad that I ain't going to be out for Mother's Day or 5 de Mayo, two of my favorite holidays. It's cool... next year! I guess I should have thought about that before I came in here.

It's sad though because I see a lot of people I know in here that are gonna be doing some time. I should be grateful that I'm getting out soon. I've been in here too many times to even be given another chance. I should have been in YA a long time ago, but it's coo because I've learned my lesson. You only live once, might as well do good.

I have a son that's looking up to me. He's going to be two and he don't need me to be in here.

But anyways, what I'm trying to say is really - slap me in the face, J.H. is only temporary, PRISON is next. So I guess this will be the last time you'll see my name on this piece of paper. To all, keep your heads up. It'll be over soon. Late!

-Michelle

From The Beat: When you REALLY GET IT, that you only live once, it does make sense to do it right. Do you understand why you keep doing the things that lead you to juvy? You have to understand the root causes of your behavior if you want to change that behavior. You have a son. He deserves a loving, nurturing mother. You have to earn back the right to be his nurturing, loving mother.

Reality In Our Society

What up, Beat? Let me hit you with what I think is reality in our society.

I really hope a Democratic candidate wins. But, in my opinion, if Barack Obama wins, he will be assassinated due to the color of his skin. And I know Hillary will bring good to our country but this masculine based country ain't going to have it. So this is what I think is going to happen if one of these Democratic candidates wins.

-Richard

From The Beat: Thank you for this piece, Richard. You are not afraid to share your opinion. We think you echo what many people think about and fear what will happen if these two persons do or don't get elected. Who would you vote for?

Hitting Bottom

Well Beat - what up? It Baby Boy. Well - hitting bottom. I think I hit bottom, but not all the way because when I get out I'm going to go back to school and do good. I want to change now.

I want to go back to school now and do good for my baby. I know she wants me to do good and I'm going to. When I get out I'm going to take care of my baby because I know she's mad at me. It's time for me to get my life together. I hella hella want to go to school now and get a job. But I'm only 15 and so yeah, when I get 16 I will get a job.

When I get out I will write you, okay Beat? Because I want you to know how good I'm doing. Well, that's it for now Beat

-Baby Boy

From The Beat: You bet it's OK to write us. We'd like to know how you're doing. We'll be waiting for the good word. Best!

Goodbye!

Hey there Beat. How's it going? This is Innocent. Today I want to talk about a couple of things I have in my mente. First of all, this is my last time with you guys. I'm getting released tomorrow morning, Gracias, adios. I just wanted to send a show while I was doing my tiempo stay up and God Bless you all.

-Innocent

From The Beat: Thanks for the kind words and good luck to you. Keep us and all the guys still doing their time in your thoughts, it may help you avoid coming back.

Dedicated To Someone Special

What's up Beat? Well I ain't really feeling the Beat's topics today, so I wanna write about someone that I had my eye on for a minute. I don't think he knows, but if so, then I guess...but I don't know because what if he ain't feeling me? Then I'ma feel dumb...but I ain't tripping, I just want him to know that this is how I feel and I think he looks coo'. I hope he gets to read this. If he does, I hope he knows who I am, he always sees me in AA haha.

Well Beat, you guys take care. Thanks for coming and I hope you guys come next week.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: We feel like a broken record, sometimes. We want you to understand that writing in The Beat is an opportunity for thousands of people to hear you, to get to understand what it's like to have lived in your shoes. When you write pieces that are, in effect, love letters, aimed at one person, you're passing up an opportunity that even most adults never get - the chance to be read by thousands. So, we'll respectfully request, again, that you send your love letters directly to the object of your affection. Save The Beat for communicating with the rest of us. By the way, Anonymous - we wish you well as you deal with your addiction problem. We're glad you're doing AA.

Mi Amor

Amor de me vida (Love of my life), that's what you are to me

Without you in my life it's oh so hard to breathe,
I know I've been gone for a lil' under two years
But my love for you baby girl is still so very clear,
I love you more than anything and need you in my life
That's why it's you I want to make my wife,
It's me and you against the world baby
And we've been outnumbered by haters from the start,
Like everybody we knew and this messed up system
keeping us apart
It feels like yesterday we were drinking Cisco's and
kissing in the park,
Now I'm stuck here writing you love letters from this cell
that's so dark
I promise you, my love, no need to cry or pout
I know I've lied in the past but I promise you it's going to
be different when I get out,
It's you I truly love and adore
Cuando salga te casas conmigo mi amor!

-Chunks

From The Beat: Well, we appreciate how much you love your girl (we took out her name because it's not fair to put that out there without asking her...). But we wonder why you would take the risk of losing her by doing whatever it was that let the system take you away from her. The system is only keeping you apart because you let them. Loving someone is more than words. It has to be accompanied with deeds, and sometimes it means sacrificing other things you like so as not to lose the thing you love.

Good Times

When I think of all the good times that I've wasted,
having good times.
When I think of all the good times that's been wasted,
having good times.
When I was drinking...
I should have been thinking...
when I was fighting...
I should have done the right thing...
all of that boozing...
I was really losing...
good times...
good times!...

-Alex

From The Beat: Sounds like a song. Now write the melody. Make it sweet.

Letters

Messages from the outside comin' through mail,
Like a blank space between words,
Loved ones leave out details.

-V.

From The Beat: One of the worst things about being locked up is not knowing everything that's going on at home and in your world. When all your information comes through the mail, things are bound to go unsaid. The only way around it is not to get yourself locked up.

Proposals

They should make it easier to get jobs and to come into this country. They should also legalize marijuana so people will stop getting arrested for smoking marijuana. Also, the three strikes rule should be banned.

-J

From The Beat: We like your ideas, but you didn't say enough about them. Can you give us reasons why you think these things. Can you tell us why the rules are whack and why they should be changed?

The One For Me

What's up Beat.

Well, the topics are not really to my liking so I'm going to write about someone very special to me...I probably won't be here by the time this comes out but I'm going to write about him anyway.

Well, my man is the only one for me, really. I once loved before, but after the first time I thought it would never happen again for me. But then I met him and I knew when I first saw him that he was the one for me. I always wanted someone who was just right for me, and I found him. I once rushed love and it went all bad. So with him, I made sure I waited because I knew if I waited then everything will go the right way. I've always dreamt about someone like him, and now I have him. If only I could be with him, but one day we will. So now I hope God hears my prayers and watches over me and him!

-Carissa

From The Beat: We wish you good luck.

The Best Mom

My moms is the best mom in the world 'cause she went through some shhh with me. The shhh I'm talking about is gettin' locked up and not listening to her and doing some other shhh.

My moms is also special to me 'cause she always knows what's best for me, like playing football and finding the finest woman, ya dig?

But when I get out I'm feelin' to get a job and kick back and chillax with the homies.

Well, Beat, I got to cut this up and shake to my cage. Laters.

-Tongan

From The Beat: We thought this was a great topic because everybody can write about their mom. You brought to the table your own experience of why your mom is the best. We, along with your mom, appreciate that you know she knows what's best for you. Moms usually do. Keep that attitude, don't chillax with the homies for too long, they will, mark our words, bring you down!

Sorry

Mom I'm sorry for the pain that I caused
I hurt you really bad.

Mom I'm sorry I left you by yourself
You cried when I got arrested

Mom I'm sorry I put you through so much
You always put your life on pause for me
I love you Mom. I will give the world to me.

-O

From The Beat: Beautiful piece. Not much else we can say; this piece left us speechless. Keep writing like this—you have a talent fused with passion that can create special things.

Leaving To Normative In Wyoming

I'm leaving to a group home in Wyoming. It is called Normative. When I leave I'm probably going to go shackled up, because I ran from 2 group homes in Turlock.

Well, when I go start my 9 to 12 month program I am going to do good. I know I'm going to have ups and downs, but I will get through it, one way or the another, because I'm trying to get home to my lovely family. My group home is in a city called Sheridan, in Wyoming.

-Chris

From The Beat: Wyoming, a land of wide and open spaces. We'd like to hear from you. Describe for us what it looks like. And watch out for those prairie dogs.

Hitting Bottom

Hey Beat. We are writing about "Hitting Bottom." Well, I could tell you something about hitting bottom.

Well, I tell you like this I grew up in a good place, a nice house and good people. As most kids if they had a big brother they would want to be just like them and I was one of them but following his steps made me end up in the JH and the ranch.

And every time I try to give myself a hand I feel that I always push it away. I say that because I always give myself stuff I am going to change and get out of JH and end up doing the same stupid stuff again. Then I see myself awake to see myself looking at bricks and brown and khaki clothes. I always hate when I hear them call me from the little box in my room to see a PO or someone I don't want to see.

-A new me

From The Beat: Your story is a strong reminder that much of our behavior depends upon our influences. Do you think there's any way we can continue to look up to our role models, while also learning from and not repeating their mistakes? It's especially hard to feel like you've hit bottom just for doing something that any other kid would do. We think a good first step to getting out of this bottom is recognizing how you got there in the first place. Your piece shows that you have this kind of insight.

Eye Opener

What's crackin Beat and Beat readers? It's me, that Chicano who's known as Nemo.

I'm gonna write about the topic on an eye opening experience. My epiphany is my beautiful baby girl. Now that I have something to live for, I see things very different. Basically I think before I react or do something stupid. I'm also a lot more mature.

The reason I'm changing is because I want to be there for my little girl unlike my father. I really don't have much else to say, so this is where I stop. I would like to thank you for reading this. Stay strong and don't let your evilness get you into trouble. Alrato.

-Nemo

From The Beat: That's the best reason of all to change your ways. Often, when we start to live for others, it teaches us how to do best for ourselves too. How will you be there for your daughter, in the ways that your father abandoned you? Will you let her know that she was your epiphany that lead you to a different life. Good luck building a strong relationship with her.

Mother's Love

My mother's love is very strong toward her children. The love we got for her will never stop. Through thick and thin, she's been by our side. My brother and I have messed up in the past by coming here but it's going to be put to a stop for good and I mean that. I've already got that in my mind set. I'm tired of seeing that expression on my mom's face. It hurts inside to see her like that, every time I come back.

I'm growing up and I'm done with all this probation bull. I love my mom and I'm proud of it. Through good times and bad times, my mom's always going to be there for me and my Lil' Bro.

Take care Lil' Bro and I love you cousin.

This is to my loving mother.

Thank you Beat for having me express my feelings on paper. Until next time. Gone.

-Indio

From The Beat: You're welcome, Indio. We always want to hear our writer's feelings and we appreciate that you let us inside yourself for a little while. We know that you do mean that you will put a stop to messin' up. However, how can you actually carry that out? Can you give us examples of what you will do differently?

My Update

What up Beat this be Richard up in the max unit. Damn it hella sucks being in this unit wishing I was with my little baby boy Richard Jr. and my wife Felicia. I have court tomorrow. I might get out 'cause I think they are dropping my charges due to not enough evidence to keep me here. Hopefully, it goes good cause the most important thing is my family. I've been here for a week and two days this time that I came back I've been the most stressed and depressed ever in my life. I thought I was never going to be able to see my son and of course my beautiful lady. Well that's enough for today. I'm gone foo. Much love to everyone.

-Richard

From The Beat: It sounds like you're really missing your family, but we're hoping with you that you get out soon to see your son and maybe even be with your wife on Mother's Day. Ever heard the quote "what doesn't kill me makes me stronger?" Hopefully you can use this time when you've been "stressed and depressed" to improve yourself and maybe not make the same mistakes.

Thoughts on The President

Yes I hope Barack Obama wins because if he wins he will be killed by a white guy. Then Hillary Clinton will be the first woman president and then she will be killed for being a woman, then another white guy will be president and then everyone will be happy. But I don't really care because I say screw the world.

-Young And Stoopid

From The Beat: We sure hope that what you write about won't happen. We know that this world can seem real screwed up sometimes, but the little good choices we make everyday can go a long way. We can't change the world, but let's do our best to change ourselves and our communities.

Concerned

I'm finally sending you guys at The Beat a serious letter.

Today on an OT I called my best friend Joey to say what up and see how his job interviews are going. To see how his new band, "Profitable Kill Count" is doing and to see and hear about all the great things I'm missing while incarcerated.

He surprised me real bad and I'm sorta worried about him because last night he tried cocaine for the first time. He was originally straight-edge and a good boy who went to church with his family every weekend, and he smoked stogies, weed, and drank with me for the first time. These weren't bad at first, and he kept them under control but through time he gave in and now he smokes daily.

I know if he wasn't high on weed all the time he wouldn't have done the coke and I'm afraid that this new band blowing up and all this partying is bringing him down. I'll be praying for him and trying to help him realize when I can.

I just need to get out so he can chill with me and not get high all the time. Anyways, I get out soon, it'll be cool soon and we'll go party all plastered like we used to, just minus the coke for him and the weed for me. This needs to be a good summer 'cause I'm join the army right when I get out.

-Bradley

From The Beat: Your letter shows some wonderful and impressive caring for your friend. Did you tell your friend how you feel about what he did? Sometimes hearing someone's concern can inspire us to change our behavior. Does this person look out for you too? Who in your life watches what you do and tells you honestly how they feel about it? Do you listen to them? As for going to the party plastered, well, good luck in looking out for one another, sounds like you are actually hurting one another.

My Feelings

What's cracking Beat and Beat readers? It's me, that Chicano named Nemo. I would like to start by saying that I'm doing good, and what's cracking to my brother Lucky? Today I'm writing about my mom. To tell you guys the truth, I have never really appreciated her until recently. Well I did - it's just that I never showed it. For me it's hard to show my feelings because I don't want people to abuse them. So, I just hide them from everybody. Recently I've been able to get closer to my mom though. We've been talking more and I even gave her a beautiful grand-daughter. I think that's what brought us closer!

All in all, I love my mom with all my heart. I'll do anything for her.

Alright then everybody. That's it for now. Lucky, stay up and remember, "They can't keep a good man down. Most of all they can't keep us Chicanos down!"

This is it...This Chicano is out, till next time. Alrato.

- Nemo

From The Beat: We certainly understand when you say that's its hard to show your feelings because you don't want people to abuse them. But it sounds like you got a great mom, and that she's a great person to trust. Share your feelings with her, and we're sure she's got some great love to give to you always. Not everyone can be trusted, but if Mom's there for you, turn to her when you're in need, and she will be there for you.

My Mom's Pain

Q-vole Beat. Well, I'm writing about the pain me and my brother case to my mom by being locked up. I'm doing 120 days and I have 2 months left. My mom comes here every day and she is sad all the time. Well, I'm out.

-Luis

From The Beat: We know it's got to be very hard for your mom to see you locked up that way. What do you say to her when she comes to comfort her? What does she want for you in your life? Does she want the same things for you that you want for yourself?

Eye Opener

Hey Beat. Well, let's see. My eye opener is my bro and my sis.

The reason why I say that is because my little bro looks up to me and he wants to be just like me and to tell you the truth, I only got one bro, my other one died. So, I have to man up because if my dad can't, I have to show my lil' sis and my bro that I can be there for them because I've been locked up since 11 and ever since then I've never had a chance to sit down and have a talk with my familia like one happy family.

My eye opener is that since I've been locked up so far, all you ever hear is just fools trying to start shhh with their own kind, like real talk.

-Steve

From The Beat: We think it's great that you recognize that there are people who look up to you and how important you are in their lives. What do you want them to learn from you? How will your behavior teach them these things?

Too Drunk

My friend was going down the wrong road and was drinking and getting hammered every day and I told him to chill out on drinking. I said he will be a drunk as adult and will go nowhere in life. So, it's better to straighten out now, before it's too late.

-Lil' E

From The Beat: This is good advice to anyone. It only gets harder to turn back around after you get further and further down a difficult path. How did you advise or help your friend to change his ways? What would you suggest for others having this similar experience?

The last Beat/ I'm Out

Well, what's up Beat, this is PW.

Well Beat, I'm finally out of this place on Tuesday and I can't wait to get out so I could chill with my family.

The day I get out I'm gonna be free and there is no one that's going to tell me what to do, but the only person that is going to tell me what to do is my father because I really respect him and he is always there for me whenever I'm in trouble. When I also get out I'm going to be chilling in the hood and I'm just going to relax there with my homeboys. This time I'm out there I'm gonna make sure that I don't come back to this place because I'm tired of this place.

Alright then Beat, stay up.

-Pee-Wee

From The Beat: You show us here that you definitely have strong goals for the future. Sounds like you know what you want from your family, your relationship with you dad, and your freedom. These resolutions can be tough to make and tough to keep. We're impressed that you can so clearly express what you want. How will you hold fast to these decisions when chilling with the homies? What will your first step be in getting you to where you want to end up. Remember, don't chill/relax for too long, don't want you to freeze!

Why?

(Verse) Ever since I was born I always wondered why
Life's the way it is and when will I die.

I stay strong and look toward the sky
Asking the Lord will he let me stay alive.

And if I don't I don't give a...

Still standing 'cause you know this world's corrupt.

I keep my head up never looking back
Under the bridge surrounded by dope friends and crack.

I can't stop and I don't think I will
Aiming for Heaven, but I'll probably end up in Hell.

I got to contain my life, conduct it and manage.
Live life as a savage and let my bullets do the damage.

(Chorus) That's why I'm still alive.

(Verse) It's a struggle to survive to open our eyes and
realize

How much mothers do cry

When another kid's found dead.

No more shots to the leg aimin' straight for the head.

Laid out in the middle of the street

Mouth full of blood shot down with the heat.

No more chances before I lay down to sleep

I pray to the Lord my soul to keep.

-Crazy and Trey

From The Beat: This is a powerful examination of how we look for comfort from God, family, or whatever, during hard times, life on the streets. How do you "stay alive" and stay hopeful when life seems to throw you nothing but curveballs?

Big Changes

I would pick Barack Obama because we need a black president. I would pick him 'cause he's influential and wants to bring change in the world and the hood and wants to stop racism around the world like the Jena 6 problem.

I would want a change in legalizing marijuana and stop harassing kids that live in the hood and the three strikes law and parolees who get out and get a stupid charge that they have to do hella time for a little thing like possession of marijuana.

-RaPhael

From The Beat: We can tell through this piece that, like Obama, you want change in the world. Change starts small, though. How can you, in a small way, bring about some changes?

How I've Been and What I Think

Well Beat, what's cracking, this is your homeboy. Well, I haven't wrote to you guys for a minute. You used to know me as Shorty, but my nickname changed to G. Well, enough with that, I'm almost out, 2 more months.

Well, I've been doing good, I try to maintain on A-level here, but I'm planning things for when I get out. I got a job lined up in construction and I'm happy because I am an uncle. I got two nieces that are both five months old, but the sad part is that I haven't met them so I'm happy and I can't wait to see them. Well Beat, with that I'm out.

-G

From The Beat: Congratulations on the new additions to your family. It's tough to feel like you're missing out on big family milestones, but if you commit to staying out, you can definitely make up for lost time. What kind of uncle do you want to be when you get out? How will you be there for your new nieces?

Am I Ready?

Well today's my birthday and I'm 17 now.

Today I'm going to write about not being ready to get released. Although I got two months left, time flies though. I'm ready to get released, but I'm not. I'm ready because I hate this place, but if I do I'm afraid I'll mess up and come back it's hard you know what I'm saying. Cops always trying to pull me over. Hopefully I stay out though.

Well, stay up to all. Peace.

-B

From The Beat: Happy Birthday from The Beat. Birthdays are a good time to reevaluate where you are in your life and think about how you want the next year to go. What do you want to look back on when you turn 18 next year? If you focus on accomplishing goals, it will take a lot of the pressure off "staying out."

Incarcerated Again On Mother's Day

What up, Beat? I've been in here for the last three Mother's Days and it sucks because I love my mom but I'm always hurting her. She loves me unconditionally and I still can't show her how much I appreciate her. I wish I could show her, but I can't because it will be a lie because I'll eventually be locked up again. I'm just know that she'll never leave my side and one day I'm gonna pay her back. Well that's it for now.

-Outlaw

From The Beat: This piece is sounding a little negative, as though you being locked up is out of your hands. Maybe the best Mother's Day present even would be taking control of your own destiny.

Tomorrow

Well, I'm stressing about court tomorrow. It's going to be a long time till I get out, but hopefully something goes right for once and I get lucky and get released, but what's the chance of that? Well, I know I going to stress like crazy because of a whole lot of other things, that's all you do in here.

To tell you the truth, being in here don't teach you shhh just make you stress a whole lot and it's a waste of time, but yea, now I know not to mess up and come back.

Well, that's it for now Beat, see yah next time, late.

-Lil' V

From The Beat: Even though you're feeling mostly stress, we think that you can still learn something here, at least about yourself. Sounds like you know more about your limits now and maybe, more about what's important to you? Do you think looking back on this stress will help you stay out of the hall in the future? How will you keep this experience in your mind to remind yourself what it was like?

Shackled Life

My whole like I've been shackled, seems I'm never living free.

Keeping police out of sight, downing 40's of O.E. Because the day that I'm free is the day that I'm dead In a casket six feet deep with a pano around my head.

So I hang with my elders while looking for support But they slang dope themselves while puffin on a port.

So my only resort is slang dope to the fullest Keep an eye out for the police while dodging from these bullets.

-Jeff

From The Beat: We here the frustration in this piece about losing and wanting freedom, but we don't want you to ever feel that you only have "one last resort." What would you do with your life if you didn't feel restricted by the streets? We think that whatever you answer here you can accomplish.

Respecting My Mom

I would give my life and respect for my mom. She's my only girl. She raised seven of my brothers when I was young.

My dad left when I was four. He was a drug dealer. He liked to sell drugs and that's why my mom kicked him out.

I hope my mom is doing good right now and I wish her the best on Mother's Day.

If she's listening, I want to get out and I just want her to have the best life a mother can have.

-C

From The Beat: It is intense to know that your mother kicked your father out for his criminal activity. How does she feel about you getting in trouble? How can you change to help her?

My Baby Girl

This is to my baby girl. I know you probably ain't reading this but I gots to express my feelin this way. Baby I love you unconditionally. I think about you every day. Your coke bottle shaped body, lips, ohh can't forget that sexy goofy-ass laugh. Shhh that turn your boy on. When I read your letter, damn you make this gangsta blush. Alicia I love you. Mamas baby don't cry, you got to keep your head up. Feel me? I'll see you soon and when I do get ready to hear them wedding bells, baby, 'cause forever you're my sweet lady.

-Lil' Slick

From The Beat: We think a lot of girls would be lucky to have a guy that feels this way about them. Lots of young Gs don't seem to want to let out their sensitive side very often, but it seems like with your girl, you can't really help it! Unconditional love is a very strong thing; tell us some more about what that means to you.

Locked Up On Mother's Day

I wish I could be out for Mother's Day, because I could take her out for dinner at Red Lobster and buy her whatever she wants, and we could just kick it, me and her, and talk about all the crazy shhh we've been through, just me and her on our own. And after we could go to 31 Flavors and get a smoothie and just go home and kick it. Then hit up the homies and kick back with her and the homeboys.

- Lil' S

From the Beat: We wish you could be with your mom, too. But hopefully soon you will be her, and stay with her. You and her have talked about the hard times you've been through. If you make the right choices, and with her help, hopefully one day soon you two will be able to look at all the good times you've had.

Best Friend

What's up Beat? Once again, it's your boy M, chillin' in the unit just posted here bored.

Well, I had a visit from my mom which was cool because we had a good talk. I love my mom; she's like my best friend. We have a close relationship. I just want to say I'm sorry for what I put you through and the tears you shed. I just want to say, "Happy Mother's Day and I love you." But everything's been good with me. Hopefully the days go by fast. Well, that's it for me. It's going to be the same thing, different day for me. Late.

-M

From The Beat: Thank you for your honesty, Milpas. Not too many people would admit that their mom is their best friend. We think that's so great that you have such a close relationship with her and that you are sorry for what you have put her through. Have you told her, to her face, how sorry you are?

My Special Mom

My mom is so special to me. I wish I could be out on Mother's Day to show her how much I appreciate her and how much I love her. I would do anything for her. My mom visits me all the time and there's not much I could do to show her that I cherish every minute of her visit. I'm going to do good and stay on top of things while in here and get out. That's one way I'll show her 'cause I'll do it for her and never come back. It's going to be so nice to spend hours at a time with her. I just can't wait.

-B

From The Beat: Hmmm, you sound so positive B, but then we don't see you for weeks because you are on C-Level. We hope you can keep these promises to your mom and yourself.

My Mom

My mom is part of the reason I'm in juvenile hall. She told the judge a lot of things she didn't have to, but I still love her. I know she still loves me but I have to do a lot to prove I deserve her respect. She raised three bad kids on her own and I know it must be hard. She visits me whenever she can, which is like two or three times a week. She also writes me all the time, making sure I know she cares.

When I get out May 20th - she said she saved up \$500, so when I get out I'm gonna go on a shopping spree. When I get out, I'm gonna make sure I listen to her and respect her. Now my relationship with my mom is even stronger and I plan to keep it that way, and try not to stress her out.

-Troy

From The Beat: We really like this piece because it shows a true and complicated relationship with your mother. Even though it hurts when our parents don't take our sides, perhaps in the long run this is more helpful than them just enabling our problems.

The Death Of My Young Cousin

Today, I'm gonna talk about my little cousin that got shot April 25. He was walking to the liquor store when five guys walked up to him and started talking shhh. They got into an argument, then one of them pulled out a strap and shot him in the chest. He passed away. The thing that pisses me off the most was that he was just fourteen years old and didn't bang.

-Sad and Hurt

From The Beat: That is so sad to realize that sometimes violence happens no matter how you affiliate. We hope that this tragedy makes you want to stop the violence and not increase it.

Mother's Day

Hey Beat. I'm about to tell you why I think my mom is special. My mom is special because I have done so much shhh to upset her, yet she still has my back. Through thick and thin she's there. When I get out of the Ranch I'm going to get something that I've been waiting for, for months. That's right, a job. I'm going to make my mom happy because it's kind of sad because my grandmother is coming over from Mexico this weekend and I'm not going to be there to say hi. And she's only going to be here for a week, and won't be back for another year or so. Well that's my story. Thanks for listening.

-Rodrigo

From The Beat: We're always glad to listen to what you have to say. We wish you the best in finding a job. Life won't ever be easy, even after the Ranch, but we know that you'll succeed in the job that you choose. Your mom will be there to watch your back, like she always has been there.

Best President

When I get out, I'll be 18 years old and old enough to vote. I'm not sure who I'll vote for 'cause I don't know much about the candidates.

When I get out, I'll sure do my research. I want to vote 'cause ... well, just to say I did and to make the country better. If I don't, I have to wait another four years.

Now, on a serious note, I really would like marijuana to be legalized. I know its illegal and it's wrong because it is illegal but it should be legal so we can smoke it. Unfortunately, I have to stay away 'cause I don't want to end up here again. The support of marijuana is a huge point for me to vote for president who legalizes it. 'Til it's legal.

-B

From The Beat: You should definitely do research and vote. There are often more candidates than just the two ... there are other parties like the Green Party that are much more liberal. They might not support legalization but you should find the people out there who support your cause.

Next President

I don't care who is the next president, but if I had to choose - I would pick someone that is not white because I haven't seen that before, but on the real - I don't care. I just care about my hood and the rest I don't trip about. But that's just me. Well, I got to go. Much love and respect to all. Alrato.

-Lil 'Man

From The Beat: Well, you should care and choosing on the basis of race is a pretty good reason. If you thought about this a little bit more, we are sure you would have a lot to say.

Mother's Day

My mom is special to me cause she always comes to visit me when she goes to work on her lunch break and she's always there for me when I need her the most. She always helps me out when I need help. Whenever I go to court, she goes with me all the time. And whenever I do something wrong, she would always forgive me and give me a place to stay - this is why my mom is special to me.

If I could, I would change me and never get locked up so she won't have to waste her lunch to come see me.

-Marcus

From The Beat: It is so sweet of your mother to come see you on her lunch break. You say that "if you could" change yourself you would, what is stopping you from making this positive change?

Do You Care Who's President?

I don't care who is president because they are all two-faced. They say something now, and later they do some thing else. So anyways, I think all the presidents tell lies to get you to vote for them, so it doesn't matter.

-Turtle

From The Beat: Turtle, we feel you on this but how do you think you can get beyond the lies?

Mother's Day

My mom is so special 'cause she is always there for me. She is my best friend. She is my everything. She did everything she could to get me out of trouble. If I did commit a crime, she would say I didn't do it. I love my mom to death that's why my mom is so special. I love you mom - Happy Mother's Day.

-Gary And Ruby

From The Beat: That does show your mother loves you so much that she would be willing to commit a crime for you, but what does it say about you that you would ask your mother to do something that could potentially get her sent to jail?

Mother's Day

What's up Beat? I'm going to talk to you about Mother's Day. Well on Sunday it's Mother's Day and I'm going to miss it, but I will send her lots of letters. I feel bad because she's alone out there. She doesn't have anyone. My little brother and I are in here serving time, while Mom's out there missing her children.

- Lil' G

From The Beat: It's sad to hear about the situation you're in. But we hope you and your mom can communicate often, and see each other soon. Stay strong, and help your little San Jose B7 13.21

My Mom Has Come a Long Way

My mother is a very strong person. She has five children and she is a single parent. She has come a long way from being drunk all the time to now being sober. She has lost one of her youngest children to the system. He was taken away at two months and is now three years old. She never got the chance to meet him and see him grow. As for her other son, he is 12 and is in my grandmother's care because of safety issues. And for the other two girls, they are in group homes and they are 14 and 16. And we can't forget the oldest, which is 17 going on 18, and she is now in juvenile hall writing this piece. She is having trouble trying to get through life, facing the fact that it's going to take time for things to get back to the way they were.

Through all of the pain, my mother hasn't given up. It's crazy to see her go through so much and not able to help her. I tried so many times to help her but she refused it. Me and my mother aren't too much of friends. We don't really agree on the decisions we each make. I know my mother has some love for me, but I wish she would show it more. I'm always left out. My mother tells me things that rip me apart, but I wonder if she will ever know it truly hurts.

The one thing I can say that is special about my mother is she's beautiful and strong. Also, one of a kind. Well, I'll close this with I love you mom, and these are the struggles I hope to see you and me through.

- Linda

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing all the details of your relationship with your mother. It seems like she has gone through a lot and that you want to help her heal.

Gone But Not Forgotten

What's good Beat? I'm just chilling. You know me, Play Boy. I'm almost leaving to the Ranch soon and my birthday is coming. So those are two good things going on for me. But I'm still tripping about all the other shhh and I'm stressing because I haven't seen my son and family. And those are two important things, not including that I'm going to be 18 soon.

I'm gone, so I will halla at the Beat later if I have a chance. To all out there, keep your heads up, and you too, Beat.

- Play Boy

From The Beat: We know what you're saying. It's hard to be away from family. But we give the same advice to you that you gave to us - stay up. Do the right things, and you'll be on your way home. Raise your son well, and be a good example for him. We hope to hear from you soon!

First Time

This is my first time being locked up. I never thought that it could end up this bad. I mean the girl wasn't worth it. She's probably doing her thing out there and I'm in here, not being able to take a breath of fresh air, not being able to feel the smoke go through my lungs.

I can't wait for the day I get out so I can go to the store and buy me some hot Cheetos and eat them till I'm full and walk down the street without any one telling me what to do or what to wear. The day I get out it's going to be hard to get on the right track and I'm not going to change from one day to another. It's going to take a lot and its going to be so hard at times.

I just wanna give up and say screw everything, but life goes on and things change. People change and life doesn't wait for nobody, so you better keep running. And thinking what's best for you.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: It is really important to recognize the difficulty of getting out and changing, but realizing your limitations is the first step to freedom.

Be Careful of Who You Fall in Love With

Sometimes I be thinking about hella stuff. The one I love told me he loved me so dearly but he's not even here to wipe my tears. My eyes are so swollen from crying for him, sometimes I think he don't even care. Being locked up for this one person showed me a lot. He told me so much stuff and I believed everything he said. I'm so hurt and heart broken. I thought the one I loved would never put me through so much stuff like this. I would never wish this upon anybody cause this stuff is messed up.

Sometimes I wish I could of made our relationship better. I wish I could go back and make everything better, but I know I can't - so I just sit here and wait until the day I see you. You know who you are my love. I just wish you could tell me why you hurt me so much. Sometimes I wonder if you're even sorry, but I know you're not. I just wish you realize how real I was and how down I was for you.

To all these females who think they're in love, just be careful of who you fall in love with and know that he's down for you and would never put you in a bad situation and love you no matter what. I'm always going to love you baby ands you know I will. I don't know why you did this but I hope you'll tell me in the future. I love you!

-Alicia

The Beat Within: This is really good advice, but are you still with this person that seems to have not been looking out for your best interest? Perhaps you should be taking some of your own advice?

My Beautiful Mother

My mommy is the most beautiful person in the world to me. I'm so happy to have her in my life.

Some people don't have a loving mother or don't even have a mom to give something to for mother's day. I hate that I have to be locked up on Mother's Day and not be able to wake her up in the morning to surprise her with something. I hope that she feels the love that I send her each and every day. I love you so much mother and I promise that I'm changing for you and I. My mother has been here to support me in everything and I can't wait to come home to her and be there for her to support her through every and anything.

Being locked up has opened my eyes so much and I was blessed to have a mother to look up to. She gave me life, brought me into this world and would never change anything about her. We've been through hard times but that is what made us into the beautiful people we are today. I love you, mother. Happy Mother's Day.

-Alicia

From The Beat: This is such a glowing piece about your mother. Sometimes it is easy to write these words down away from our parents, but you should make sure she knows how you feel.

My Mom

I love my mom a lot. I think what makes my mom special is that no matter how much I mess up all the time, she still loves, cares for me and she never gives up on me.

What I think she wants for me the most is to be good, stay in school, not do drugs, and go to college.

When I get out, I'ma try to do better, get off probation, and finish high school. I love you mom. Well, I'm gonna be cut. Alrato.

-Lil' Oso

From The Beat: And what's so hard in making her wishes come true? Just do it. What she desires you to do is for your own good. Trying won't solve anything.

I'm Still Here

Mi amour, forever always I imagine us.
You've drawn me towards such passion,
how could I stop now?

I couldn't ask for more,
but that the lord up above.

You're more delicate than a single rose,
more precious than diamonds.

I want you to know
I'm still here for you always.
I'll be the one to hold it down.

My word is yours, don't ever doubt it.
I promise through tides and waves I'll
be here to wash all your worries away.

Bear with me, love.
The things you desire
are yet to be yours,
within time, you'll see.

I can't wait to wake up to someone as
special as you, wrap you in my arms
and call it a night.

As long as it takes
count on me, for this is yet,
another blessing.

- Anonymous

From The Beat: One of the great things about love is how much poetry it has inspired throughout the ages. There are some great lines in here ... keep writing!

Mother's Day

Damn, this is my second time I'm locked up for Mother's Day. Well, I feel hella bad cause I screw up again. My mom has been here for me and every time she visits me she always puts a smile on my face and she's been my mother and father not just for me but for my other sisters.

When I get out, I'm gonna do my best to do what I have to do and to stop coming here 'cause I'm gonna be eighteen years old next week. But when I get out, I'm gonna be out there helping her with money and other stuff that will help her a lot. If she was here with me, I would tell her that I am so sorry that I've put her through hell. Mommy, I'm gonna be a good hija 'till the day she has to go to the heavens up above. Pero Mom, I just want to tell you that I will always love you and for you to forgive me for all the pain and all the tears you've cried for me, I wish I could forgive you and wipe your tears off your beautiful face. I just want to tell you just one more time I heart you mommy, and to the people in here - keep your heads up high.

- Keila

From The Beat: Keila, we already miss you and hope you are doing good at the Ranch. We know you will be able to keep your head down, finish your program and get out to help your mother, just like you are planning.

Only If You Knew

What's up Beat,

This is a lil' somthing for that special someone I
bumped into you a few times:

I wonder why?

Your smile, your eyes,
damn boy, you got a girl mesmerized.

I'm tryna see wassup with you, boo.

Maybe I'll come visit you soon, you know maybe
bump into you again, ya dig?

See you ain't ever have to worry about me
as long as you keep it real,
whatever's on your mind
speak on how you feel.

I'm that one peeping you out.

Maybe next time
you can walk behind me,
cause one door closes
I'll have the next one open.

-Cutie Pie

From The Beat: Hmmm, a poetic and cryptic love poem. It reminds us of that Erykah Badu song, "Maybe Next Lifetime."

Mother's Day

What make my mom so special to me are many things.
My mom is hella cool most of the time. My mom feeds me, puts clothes on me and a roof, and she's always there when I have court, and here on visit days.

I think what my mom mostly wants from me is to go to school, stop getting in trouble and have a good life after I'm done with school.

When I get out of this place I'm going to get my credit and high school, and stop messing around and getting in trouble.

Well, I thank my mom for everything and happy Mother's Day for her. I love my Momma.

-Thoum

From The Beat: What makes it hard for you to make her wishes a reality? If she has done so many things for you, you should consider that and do your best in giving back. In order to receive, you have to give.

Missing You

I miss a lot of people and one of them is my mother
I did wrong and I know it's hurting her
My oldest sibling is my brother.

I miss him too since we don't live together.
Well, there's Judy, and she's my sister.

Now I'm locked up and guess what? I miss her.

Then comes my friends,

They also will be there for me 'till the end.

There's Daniel, my closest homie,

and I know he is going to be at my next court date for me.

Then there's Oscar, my second best

I still miss him even though we got problems that are a mess.

Then there's my beautiful girlfriend Jarleen

She's always nice and never, never mean.

Then there's my friends that are older.

They always have my back,

they are like pads on my shoulder.

Justin, he is one of the coolest.

When I ask for us to go somewhere he says, "let's do this."

Then there is Nim, he wrote me a letter.

He tells me he wishes me better.

I miss all these people, there's nothing I can do,

Only wait till my case is through.

-Randy

From The Beat: It seems like you got people expecting your return to home. You should stay with those friends and family member who want the best for you. Through your poem, we don't see negativities in your life. If you made a mistake, learn from it and stay out of here. Enjoy your friends and family members out of here.

What It Is Beat

Well today I'm going to say happy Mother's Day. Mom I love you and I'm sorry I not home to be with you for Mother's Day but when I get out I'm going to make it up to you mom. But yeah mom, I hope you have a good Mother's Day and don't try to think about me 'cause I don't want you to cry.

So have a good time mom and I love you and miss you mom. See you when I get out mom. Your Son, Baby Boy. Well Beat I got to go. Oh yeah to all the moms out there have a good Mother's Day.

Well I'm out Beat... Your boy....

-Baby Boy

From The Beat: This is a very sweet piece to your Mom and all the Mothers out there period. We see that you recognize and appreciate your mother. It doesn't have to be Mother's Day to tell your mom that you love her though. We hope that when you get out you stay out and really show your mother how much you love her and appreciate her. Don't cause her any more pain and grief. That'll be her biggest gift of all.

My Lady

I remember when I first say my lady, her eyes were beautiful just like an angel's eye. That is the reason why I called her angel eyes.

We were in love for a coo' minute and we still are, but things are going bad.

When I get out, I'm going try to make things better because I love her. Well that's my little story. I'm out. I love you Angel Eyes. Alrato.

-Lil' Oso

From The Beat: Are you sure you'll do things as supposed to when you get out. We've heard this phrase so many times. Let's see! Work on you first, and then see if the magic is still there between you and your girl.

Stubborn

G-onda Beat! Pues, I personally think that we don't like to admit that we're wrong because we don't want to look bad because we like to know that we do everything good. Alrato!

-Bradley

From The Beat: This is true. Our sense of confidence and self worth is often wrapped up in feeling like we are correct and knowledgeable. When this is threatened our emotional security is threatened too. Can you admit when you're wrong? How do you do it without losing your pride?

When I Get Out ...

What up Beat? This is young outlaw once again! Well when I get out, I ma move to my aunties' house.

I think this move is good because it gets me out of the neighborhood I live in. I'll hate leaving my mom. Also when I get out I'm gonna get a job at Safeway. It's already saved for me.

Damn well that's about it Beat. Much love to all.

-Young Outlaw

From The Beat: That's a good start! Use this opportunity to reflect on the negativities you have been serving and living. Get this job, get your money and also don't forget about getting an education. That's very important as well.

Regrets

When I'm in here, I always think about my family. I think if my mom would is sad, if I wasn't there for Mother's Day, the day when she gets to be proud of being a mom.

How I got locked up was a short story, but it came to be a long story. One day, during break, my friend had some trouble with this one guy, but I made it into my problem too.

I sometimes have regrets, but when I think about it, I was only helping my friend. So I went up to the guy, I saw a clean shot, and then I knew that was the moment to hit him. The whole time I did not think or worry about the consequences.

The reason I'm locked up is that he got too badly injured because it involved kicking and hitting. The guy went to the hospital and pressed charged and is trying to sue us. These are my consequences.

Tomorrow I will have a chance, a sentence. If I get out, I know that I can't change the past, but I can change the future. A few of us got locked up, the others didn't. We didn't even know who else was hitting him. It all came down on us.

Now when I think about it, it's always regrets that I can't change. Now sometimes I have a feeling I might get out, and sometimes I might not. Now I won't be able to see my family for a while. It's been like almost a month, and all I can say is: it was not worth it.

When I get out, I will go to school and then not skip any class, not smoke, and stay out of trouble. I will try my best on catching up and try getting a good career. I would like to study computer engineering because I love working with them and using them. I will change, and become a better person.

-James

From The Beat: That's right! You can't changes things from the past, but you can change the future. You can change the things you were doing wrong in the past for a better your future. The good part about your situation is that you regret what you have done and have realized that what you did wasn't worth it. We are humans being and as human being we make mistakes that get us into hard situations that teach us a lot and make us stronger and stronger. Remember that we are not perfect. Don't give up, you are learning and that's what counts. You have dreams. Make them a reality.

The First Day We Met

I knew we had something special between us, the way I looked into your eyes was like seeing an angel. It was love at first sight.

The day I held you, it felt so unexplainable, the first time our lips touched, I felt like I was in heaven, and I felt our love was never gonna die and last forever.

The day I saw you cry, my head hurt knowing you were sad. I tried everything to make you laugh, and it worked. I hate to see my sweet peanuts sad. I would give up the world just to get back with you. I love you and good-bye.

-Rene

From The Beat: Before giving up the whole world, get your freedom back and stay out of here. If she likes the way you are describing her, we wouldn't doubt a moment you'd be by her side when you get that chance again.

A Special Lady

Mi jefita is a very special lady. She means a lot to me. I don't know what I'll do without her 'cause without her I know I'll be messing up even more! Without her, I won't have anything to live for, and I'll do all the shhh I wanna do.

She's my life. She's all I'm living for because she is the one that woks very hard to fix me and my brothers. She provides a hot plate everyday and to have a roof over our heads. She 's a very strong woman. She can raise five sons on her own. She tries to show us the right way, but I was destined to live mi vida loca. That is why she is a very special lady to my brothers and I.

Well to all out there that still have their jefitas (mothers) take good care of them 'cause there is only one mom. You know that she can't be replaced. So this Mother's Day, and everyday let her know that she means the world to you. Show her love and respect.

To all out there, keep your heads up you know who you are.

-Brownie

From The Beat: What makes you be sure that you were destined to life the life you are living? What? Are you going to say what you are recommending others to do? You need to show how much you care for your mothers with actions and accomplishments not just with words and advice. There's more to show. Plenty more! Take care of what's yours before you don't get any more chances.

Mom

The thing that makes my mom so special is that she has been with me through thick and thin. Even when I am down, she is always there to make me happy.

Now that I'm locked up, she isn't there to make me happy no more, and that makes me mad. Now that she isn't there for me, I am sad and I have a lot of hurt in my heart.

The only time I get to see her is on Sunday, and I hate that she has to see her son locked up. Every time she leaves I give her a big hug and I don't want to let go, but I have to. Then after that, it's back in that cold cell.

When I get out, I will show my mom a changed man that is respectful. The thing that my mom wants most for me is just to have a good life and to get out of this gang stuff. That's what I am going to do, just for my mom. Love you mom.

-Ruben

From The Beat: If you really hate to see you here, don't be here. Whether you believe it or not, it is very painful for a mother to see her kid in a situation like this. Good plan! Getting out of the gang life is the first step and best choice you can do to make a difference in your life. What else are you willing to do for her and yourself?

Dear Mom

It is my second day since I have been locked up in here. I have been wanting to come back to the outside world.

I want to go to school, like my first purpose when I came to the US. My family includes mom always place their hope on me.

This weekend will be Mother's Day. Mom, I've never wanted to put you in that bad situation, otherwise; you are here for my graduation to appreciate that I've grown up. It might be bright road ahead for me. Unfortunately it turned out of my control.

Every plan I set up for the future, seem to be delayed but still have hopes. I hope the court would give me a favor to graduate next two weeks to keep studying in the US, the only place that I want to be and study.

I turned in a wrong way and I would find the way back.

Are you mad at me mom? I'm still your child I will keep my head up. I will make you pleased by fulfilling my duty as your son.

-Anh

From The Beat: That's the spirit. You sound very convincing and that's what motivates someone to succeed. If you get another chance to make all your dreams a reality, don't waste it. What are your plans? It's time to make plans, stick with them, and accomplish them. Make your mom proud of you. Doesn't she deserve it?

Jefas Day

Hey Beat, que-onda, well my topic for today is about my jefita (mother). Well to be straight up, it feels messed up when I see my jefita cry.

La neta (The truth is) I don't like putting my jefita through a lot of stress, and worry because that shhh ain't no way to show love. To be straight up, all I can say is perdóname jefita por mi vida loca, (Sorry mother for my crazy life) and for what I put you through.

Pues that's all I really have to say. Well thanks Beat for your time. Well, to my homies, stay up, much love and respect.

-Lil' Silent

From The Beat: If you don't like her to suffer due to your way of dealing with life, why do you continue being the way you are? You need to realize what are the things that are more important in life. Work on this!

My Mom

My mom is the best because she was always there no matter what. I could have told her anything. She was my best friend, and she always will be. No one could replace her. I love her more than she loves me.

I loved how she took care of me when I was little. Now she is crying, back then she was laughing instead. I really messed up, but I would still fix it. She says everyone makes mistakes in life. I would if she still thinks of me differently, probably not, because she loves me no matter what or what I do.

I wonder what she is doing. I wish I could get out and never come back to this place because I never saw my mom cry so much. My mom is my world, and without her, I would go crazy. I wish I had made the right choice because then I wouldn't even be here. I would be with her at home.

-Matthew

From The Beat: What's done is done. All you got now left from your mistakes are regrets, regrets that will help build the type of man she wants you to be. What you did in the past, should stay in the past. You made wrong choices in the past. It's time to make the right ones. What next?

My Mother

My mother is the best mother in the world, because she's always been here for me and will never give up on me.

She's bought me things, she's helped me when I was hurt, and she helped me all the time. She is the nicest, most caring mother in the world and she makes me happy. When I'm mad, she cheers me up all the time.

She wants me to go to school and finish, so I can go to college. She wants me to have the best life that I can have, she does not want me to be a nobody, so when I get out I'm gonna do every thing I can to make her proud of me. I'm gonna give her trust back.

-Rene

From The Beat: We hope so! What are your plans? Are you going to do what she wants for you? Mothers always want the best for their children. One day, you'll have kids and you'll wish they became what you wish them to be. This is the time for you to become what she wants you to be.

Life

Life means a whole lot to me because I have a lot of people in the outs that need me and care about me like my girlfriend who is a few months pregnant. She needs me with her to take her to the doctors appointments, and she also needs my support when she is going to have the baby.

My mom also she is going to need me when she has a bad day, and she needs to talk to someone or she needs something. Well this is why life is important.

-Monkey

From The Beat: OK, you got two big motivations to stay out of here. What are you waiting for? Soon another member of your family will arrive, and you need to be prepared for him/her. Having a kid is one of the most beautiful things in life, but it comes with a lot of responsibilities as well. Ready for that? If not, you should!



To my Mom

What up Beat Within!

Mom, wow, can't believe I'm writing you again from j-hall. I thought last year, around this time, I would never be writing you from here or wouldn't be able to tell you "Happy Mothers" day in person, give you a hug and a sick present you deserve. I've been wanting to give you.

You have been there for me when nobody was and will when every one turns their backs. When a girl broke my heart, you were the one to pick it back up again, and the one who keep me strong! I love you mom! Every day, I hope I turn out to be the person you expect me to be, and more. I wanna see you smile.

-Sean

From The Beat: What's holding you back to make her happy? It's your choice. From what we are reading, you have a special mother, but haven't been given her what she deserves. This is the second Mother's Day that you have missed. Be careful with the third one or more. It would be very sad.

Mothers' Day

My mom done everything for me, feed me, put cloths on my back, and gave me money when she didn't need to.

She stresses for me. She said she wouldn't visit me and she does a lot of times. She said she would leave, but she never did. That's how much she loves me.

I never told her how much I loved her, until I lost her by being locked up. She always tells me "you'll never realized how much you love me 'till I'm dead. Then, you will regret how you treated me, how you lived when I was alive, not listening to me or doing stuff to stress me out me, having to cry for you when I'm gone. You regret everything..."

And how to feel when you locked up when Mother's Day comes; and you're not there to show her you love her.

-Goofy

From The Beat: She's right! It's like the saying that says, "you never know what you got until it's gone." She's telling you something that you will someday remember. When it happens, it will pains you when recalling these words. And that's for sure! Do the right thing!

Suppose To Be Free!

We're in America, we're supposed to be free, and yes I'm locked up.

-W

From The Beat: Yeah America has laws too, and if you break them, you will get locked up. So don't break the law and you won't find yourself in jail.

Mother's Day

What makes my mom special is that she still loves me even though I made a big mistake. I just hope I get out on my next court date to be home with her.

-Cuu-Cuu

From The Beat: Sounds like you do have a special mom. We hope you get out also. We also hope that you learn from this mistake you made so you won't ever have to come back to these facilities again.

Mother's Day

My jefita (mother) is special to me because she's always there for me. She will accept me for who I am and doesn't care what I've done. What she wants for me is to be the best I can be.

So my plan for when I get out is to appreciate every moment I have with her and try to stay out.

- Maniac

From The Beat: We're sure that she cares what you do? She loves you so much that she has to accept the way you are. We hope you do what you've written in your last sentence. Nothing was made to last forever. Remember that!

Mother's Day

Hey what's up Beat? Mother's Day is a very special for me, because my mom is the one who brought me to this world. She took care of me when I was a little kid, and she brought me everything that I needed as a little kid.

I love my mom so much. If I were to loose her, I would be sad because she the only one who has always been there for me when I need her the most in my life. This is why Mother's Day is so important to me.

-Jose

From The Beat: That's why you do your best in staying near her and out of places like this. It seems that she has done so much for you. Now answer this question, what have you done for her?

*'Cause I love you mom,
Tears are coming down my face
as I stay calm.*

MOMMA DAY

I wish I was there for you,
To know what you would do.

'Cause I love you mom,
Tears are coming down my face as I stay calm.

Can't believe you chose him over me,
I'm not lying, can't you see?

I want to tell you "you're in my heart",
And never be apart.

Mom, get out of my hair,
I know you care.

You act like the Dali Lama,
But don't cry for me, momma.

I love you Momma,
Happy Momma Day.

- La L

From The Beat: You stated that "you're in my heart and never be apart" and then you say, "Mom, get out of my hair". Why do you praise her and then push her away? No matter what, your mother will always be the woman who gave you life. On Mother's Day, don't be skeptical - just remember the happy times.

BOTTOM

I hit bottom a few times,
With these little crimes.

But I didn't get caught,
Until I stole - it was a lot.

I'll make it back up,
'Cause I know what's up.

I don't need helping
hands,
Just like a flying plane
that lands.

I won't be on bottom
for long,
I won't do wrong.

I don't wanna hit bottom
again,
'Cause I don't want 5
years to 10.

-La L

From The Beat: You refer to your crimes as "little", but they still landed you in jail, so it caught up to you. You state that you "don't need helping hands, just like a flying plane that lands", yet a pilot can't land the plane on its own - it certainly needs all those extra hands.

Life

Life's a witch then you die,
cops tryin' to lock me up for getting' high.
I ain't no criminal I just want to be free
to be me get stupid dumb and a lil' hyphy.
I know they just hate me 'cause they ain't me,
yeah they want to profile to,
but hey can't do it when they try to get stupid.
It don't look cool, ooh they going to make me act a fool,
why should I suffer for being me for being great
for blowin' grapes profilin' in my scrape,
yeah the hate just 'cause I'm getting' eight... Teen
yaddadamean!

-Cool

From The Beat: Yes life is hard, not a walk in the park! As for using drugs, you are only asking for problems with the police, especially if you are all about chillin' in the hood and being off one!

SANTA CRUZ

Being Wrong

It's not hard to admit that we are wrong. It's just that we don't like being wrong. That's why we always lie about it. We don't like to be wrong. I had to lie about some things in the past when they tried to blame me for something I did do. But like I said - I always say I didn't. I always have to defend myself. I say it isn't true, because I don't want to look like a dimb ass. That's it.

-Leo

From The Beat: But this is honest. You're telling the truth here. And it isn't so hard to do, is it?

Purpose?

Sitting here I still don't know my purpose.
Some might say on the day I die
the life I lived was worthless.
Too much trust led to too much pain.
Some chose to sacrifice others.
The victim's not to blame.
No one seems to gain
as the wounds
never heal.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Beautifully written. Who are you? Why are you hiding. This is terrific.

Thoughts Of Right And Wrong

As I sit and rot away
because of a judge who doesn't play
I think and ponder of a positive way
to get through this awful day.
But what do you know from right and wrong?
Not a whole lot, because I'm gone
away from society, but not too long.
Enough time to get what's mine.
All this knowledge that can be confined
in this brain that's designed to grind.
Having thought of how to shine
I've learned a lot from reminiscing on time.

-Trent

From The Beat: We'd like to hear what you've learned as you look back on your life. What, exactly, do you need to do "to shine"? It sounds like you're making progress.

*All this knowledge
that can be confined
in this brain
that's designed to grind.*

They Mean Everything To Me

I am afraid to lose my mom and family because they mean everything to me. If I was to lose my mom, I don't know what I would do because she has done everything for me and has always been by my side through all of the trouble I've gotten into. She always puts food on the table and bought me all the main things to survive. I am afraid to lose my family because they always try to lead me to do right but I refuse to do the right thing. They let me live with them so I could change my ways of being.

-Luis

From The Beat: Sometimes it takes a drastic situation to make people recognize what others mean to them. What will you do in the future to make sure they know you're not taking them for granted and to show that you really do appreciate what they do for you? We all take our family for granted at times, but the important thing is that each of us realizes it, apologizes, and fixes it.

Should I

Dear Lord,
Please answer my prayers
And this one question
Why am I here?
Do you have a purpose
Besides me being a pin cushion
Do the streets have to make me feel home
Why when I'm in a crowd of people I'm so alone
How can I change when the devil holds me down
Where's my heart why can't it be found
Why do my tears come so sudden
Why do thoughts of death seem so funny
Why am I running from life itself
After all these hurtful things why do I have good health
Can you feel the pain that I hide from the world
Do you see me as your little girl
Will I be able to be in heaven one day
Will an angel come rescue me
When my prayers are said out loud
The only one that answers in the man underground
Can you hear these questions I ask?
Or should I make this breath my last?

- Angela

From The Beat: You ask many questions about life and the decisions you should make. We want you to know that life is full of darkness and light. We most often identify with what we spend the most time thinking upon...like the saying "garbage in, garbage out". What do you spend time reading and listening to and talking about? Who do you spend the majority of your time with? Yes, everyone has a destiny. You feel alone, because you don't know yourself. You are in detention as a consequence for your actions. Many give the devil credit for their bad decisions; however he has no power over us, only what we give him. If we are going to save our own life, we have to take responsibility for our actions. The responsibility ultimately lies within us, not on an angel or devil.

Athlete With A 'Tude

I am Luis and I am from Phoenix, AZ. I like to play sports as in basketball because I can run around and play against other people. I am a loving, caring, respectful and hardworking person. I have a bad attitude. I like to work. I like to play video games, spend time with my family, have stake outs, play horse shoes and watch basketball games or football games.

-Luis

From The Beat: Everything sounds good here except the bad attitude. It is interesting that you point out that you "have a bad attitude" after listing many positive attributes. What does "having a bad attitude" mean to you? How has affected your relationship with your teammates, with your coaches? Keep in mind that succeeding in sports, at work, and in relationships is nearly impossible with a bad attitude. "Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference." - Winston Churchill

Life

Moment by moment, day by day
I slowly watch my life waste away
Alone in the windows with empty thoughts
My tears flowing down like little rain drops
The guilt and the sorrow kills the beauty I see
As I wait for tomorrow to slowly pick away at me
The smile for tomorrow is the mask for today
As all the paths I chose led me the wrong way
As I look at the mountains and the sun in the sky
I wonder how it would feel to fly
High above in the clouds and the beautiful birds flying about
Day by day I try to explain my fate to myself
And all this is fake
But it's real, it's something I have to face so now I live day by day

-Angela

From The Beat: It seems like you're looking at your life through eyes of negativity. If you were to look at your life with a more positive outlook, you would begin to feel like your flying through clouds of success, happiness, and serenity. Your smiles would be real, not masks. Beauty won't be buried in sorrow and your paths would lead to gold. Face what's now, and over come it. Then, move on without looking back. Life will get better if your outlooks improve.

A Sharp Pain

Have you ever heard a whispering sound
Have you ever been underground
Does a sharp pain poke your heart
Was it ever worth it to start
What do you see when you look in my eyes
Will you ever see beyond my disguise
Have you ever had a sharp pain poke your heart
When that someone leaves you alone in the dark
Do you care the way you say you do or is it the devil shining through you
Why is everything you say such a lie
I hope you suffer before you die
Now your self-conscience is all that's left
Now I'm gone no more wasting my breath.

-Angela

From The Beat: Angela, your poem was full of very inspirational thoughts. We know it is hard to trust people when their actions speak louder than their words. It is very hard to have your heart broken and you ask yourself "Is it worth it?" But we encourage you to believe in yourself and trust yourself and you will see that the effort you put forth to achieve your goals will take you on a journey worth traveling.

Durango

It seems like I try so hard
To only get it thrown in my face
And I remember the time and my life that I waste
Here it goes they play it like it's a game
There goes my shirt I just start to pace
My face turns red and I want to scream
And stab myself in the heart and slowly watch it bleed
This is what it feel like an animal trapped in their cage
They take my self-esteem so I begin to rage
My pride goes down I feel the failure set in
Then I go to sleep and wake up to this again.

-Angela

From The Beat: The title of this piece could be Groundhog Day, like the movie...same thing, different day. In this movie the same day was repeated over and over until inner changes took place in an outward demonstration. Is there a lesson (or lessons) you are missing that once you allow yourself to receive the message, the lesson will no longer repeat itself? Is it possible there is a message you can learn from in these repeat experiences?

My Crazy Life

I grew up a screw up,
Introduced to the hood and blew up
Out of AZ
Insane in the brain
Gots me going crazy
Up on that lazy
Cops is trying to taze me
No they can't phase me
My girl just maybe
But lately everything
I've gone through has gone crazy
And it's plain to see you can't change me
I gonna be from the hood for life,
But it ain't easy being me
Should I see the penitentiary
Or should I stay free.

-Andrew

From The Beat: We understand it's in style to be "loco", however we ask you where will "this crazy life" lead you? Being honest with you, it will most likely be either to prison or to a bad end. You describe a difficult life, but we want to encourage you that there are others who have also faced giants in their life and have come out on top...no longer neck deep in doo-doo. We, as humans, have choices-we can choose to either live locked up or to live free. It's up to you which you will choose.

Time In Durango

I am with Durango detention for getting into trouble and I have been with Durango for 6 times. The last time I've been in Durango 5 month 27 days. I'm a good person when I want to be. The staff is strict and they try their best to take good care for the safety and security. They try their best to keep it fun with the detainees. All the time I think it's hard in Durango detention, but it's fun to come and think about it.

-Joshua

From The Beat: You have been in Durango six times. Obviously you like the structure of detention, however it is better if you are able to live a structured life outside detention. Structure is like following a schedule, like here in detention, getting up at a certain time, going to school at a certain time, eating at specific times, etc. What keeps you from following an schedule on the outs? How would following a schedule/having structure change your life?

God Finding Me, Changing Me

God is changing me to be a better person, bringing me closer to my girlfriend, my kids. I glorify Him and everything He does for me. I glorify him and everything he does for my kids, and I honor you and praise you.

-Glorifier

From The Beat: It's wonderful that you feel that God is guiding you. You sound like you have a grateful heart.

I'm About To Be Free

Sitting In Juvenile Hall
Bouncing from wall to wall
Got terminated from placement
I ain't trippin' or holding resentments
I'm about to be free
After fifteen months, can't you see?
Fifteen months went by quick

-Tony

From The Beat: Fifteen months is a long time to be away from your real life. Are you ready to hit the ground running—back to school, maybe a part-time job, hanging out with your family and friends? It should be nice to be able to just stare at your own bedroom walls, instead of bouncing off your walls in your juvy room.

My Life In The Hood

My life is not so good.
My life grew up in the hood.
Running around, doing stuff, up to no good
My life is not so good
At nighttime hustling around the neighborhood
I ask myself-if I had a dad will my life still be in the hood?
My life is not so good
I hate my life just because I'm so hood
I wish I can change my life and move out of the hood
My life is not so good.

-Devon

From The Beat: You say your life is not good. We believe life is what you make it. Many of us grew up without a father actively involved in our lives. As far as moving away-the hood is not a place, but a "state of mind". Change your mind, change your life.

What I Always Wanted From My Parents

What I want from my dad is a relationship. I want to talk to my dad and I want him to listen

to me so I don't yell at him. I want to be able to tell him how I feel and let him know what I am scared of. I want my dad to actually hold me and tell me everything is going to be alright.

I want my step mom to say she loves me and give me hugs. I want her to tell me it is okay

and that she forgives me. I wish for my dad and step mom to say they love me once in a while and treat me with a little respect and love like they show my little 15-year-old sister. I'm only 2 years older so why don't they show me that same love? That is what I want from my parents.

-Cynthia

From The Beat: Cynthia-it would be good for you to be able to communicate your desires to your parents...have you ever considered writing your feelings in a letter? This may be healing for you, and you may be surprised at the impact your communication makes. Learning how to tell others what we want, without demanding it, is a mature and respectful aspect of relationships.

Mother

M My mother is special
O Other people don't compare
T Truth is what comes from her mouth
H Her touch gives me relief
E Everything I ever wanted
R Respect her until I die

D Daddy is to me when he's not there
A Amazing as the apples in the spring
Y You'll always be mine
Love,

-Tiera

From The Beat: You sound like you have a beautiful, gentle mother. How is she doing at home without you? What qualities does she have that you emulate? How do you hope to be like and/or not like her, if you ever become a mother some day?

*I ain't trippin'
or holding resentments*

Lo Más Bajo

Lo más bajo que caí fue caer donde estoy. Me quisieron ayudar y no quise hacer caso a la cosas que debe haber hecho y aprovechar.

Me arrepiento, pero sé que algún día tengo que salir de aquí.

Lo más bajo que he visto fue un amigo que tenía problemas con el alcohol. Estaba dejando a su familia y se estaba metiendo más en el alcohol. Lo bueno fue que él recapacito y recuperó a su familia.

From The Beat: Vistes como si se puede recapacitar. El es un buen ejemplo de el cambio que tú necesitas hacer para mejorar tu vida. Aprende de él y que te vaya bien.

The Lowest

That lowest I've been is where I am right now. They wanted to help me, but I didn't listen to the things I should have done and take advantage of.

I regret it, but I know that one day I'll get out of here.

The lowest I've seen in someone was a friend who had a drinking problem. He was leaving his family and was getting deep into the drinking stuff. The good thing was that he reflected on the things he was doing and got his family back.

-Juan, San Francisco

From The Beat: You see how there is time for reflection. He is a good example that you need to better your life. Learn from him and good luck!

Mi Vida Desde Pequeño

Ahora me encuentro solo porque mis padres me dejaron cuando yo apenas era un bebe. He sufrido mucho hasta ahora. Tengo 16 años y he pasado una vida muy triste y desagradable.

Jamás he tenido un apoyo de un padre o de una madre. Hay momentos que he deseado quitarme la vida y he buscado refugiarme en las drogas, pero tampoco me hace sentir bien.

From The Beat: Entendemos que hayas tenido una vida muy dura en tu vida y lo sentimos mucho. Sentimos que hayan padres que no pueden darles a sus hijos el aprecio que se merecen. Ahora ya eres mayorcito y ya tienes la capacidad de pensar claro y tomar decisiones de adultos. Si tubistes una vida sola, no quiere decir que te vas a matar o vas a buscar la perdición en otras cosas negativas. Tienes una vida por delante. No tienes idea de lo que te espera en el futuro. Mira a tu alrededor y empieza a disfrutar lo que tienes. ¿Sabes que es eso? Tienes la vida, una vida que puedes hacer con ella lo que quieras. Lo que quieras.

My Life Since Very Young

Now I find myself alone because my parents left me when I was a babe. I've suffered so much until this day. I am 16 years old and I've lived a sad and unpleasant life.

I never had the support of a father or mother. There are times in which I think in taking my life away and I've tried to refuge myself in drugs, but it hasn't worked.

-Anderson, San Francisco

From The Beat: We can understand that you've lived a hard life and we are very sorry. We are also sorry that there are parents that can't give the appreciation a child deserve. Now you are older and you have the capacity to think clearly and to make choices an adult can make. If you have a lonely life, that doesn't mean that you are going to find your own perdition with negative things. You have a life ahead. You don't have an idea of what the future has for you. Look around you and start enjoying what you have. You have a life that can be enjoyed as any way you want it.

Lo Que Mi Madre Me Ha Dado

Para mí, mi madre es lo más hermoso de mi vida. Es la mejor madre para mí. Se merece lo mejor del mundo. Se merece ser bien tratada porque una madre es lo más hermoso que pueda haber. Madre solo es una y padre son un monton.

Creo que para todos, la madre es lo más hermoso del mundo porque una madre es la que mira por ti cuando estas en problemas.

Cuando te encuentras lejos, es la que se preocupa por ti. Cuando estas solo, así como lo estoy yo aquí en los Estados Unidos, ella se preocupa.

Estoy con mi esposa y mis hijos, pero me hace falta mi madre. Siempre la recuerdo.

Gracias a Dios me ha dado la oportunidad de ayudarles cuando puedo y acordarme de ella.

Gracias a ella que se preocupó por mí, aprendí a leer, a escribir y a respetar a los demás para ser respetado. Me enseñó a ganarse el amor de todos lo cual es lo más importante.

En el Día De Las Madres, le deseo lo mejor del mundo porque se lo merece. Que Dios le de muchos años de vida.

From The Beat: Tienes una buena madre quien te ha enseñado lo mejor que alguien le puede enseñar a una persona. Saber respetar a los demás para ser respetado es una gran cosa que es valorada por las personas. Como tú dices, ella se merece muchísimo más que estas palabras. Deberías de darle TU lo que ella realmente se merece. Tú sabes que es lo que ella necesita para ser feliz. Hazlo!

What My Mother Has Given Me

For me, my mother is the most beautiful I have in my life. She's the best mother of all. She deserves the best of this world. She deserves to be treated right because a mother is the most beautiful thing you can have. There's only one mother and many fathers.

I think for all, a mother is the most beautiful thing because a mother is who takes care for you when you're in trouble.

When you are away, she's the one who worries for you. When you are alone, like I am in the United States, she worries as well.

I live with my wife and kids, but I miss my mother. I always remember her.

Thank God because He has been letting me help her when I can and I think about her.

Thank to her, she worried about me so I could learn to read, write and respect others to be respected. She taught me to gain the love of others that is one important thing.

In Mother's Day, I wish the best to all mothers because they deserves it. God bless you and grant you with more years of life.

-Juan, San Francisco

From The Beat: You have a great mother who has taught you the best thing a person can teach other. To respect others to be respected is a thing people value so much. Like you've said, she deserves so much more than words. YOU should grant her with what she really desires. You know what she needs to be happy.

I wish the best to all mothers because they deserves it.

Lo Que Quiero

Hola yo me llamo Edgar. Yo les voy a platicar como es que no puedo darle un abrazo, un beso ni decirle que la amo a ella. La razón es porque estoy en la juvenil. Ella vive en el estado de Washington y es muy raro cuando la llamo.

Le deseo lo mejor y le pido a Dios que me deje salir lo más pronto y que me reduzcan la condena.

Quisiera graduarme de high school y darle el diploma a mi madre para demostrarle a todos que yo puedo.

From The Beat: ¿Y que te detiene que te prevenga tener tu diploma? Todo es posible en esta vida con que lo tengas desees con tu corazón y tengamos vida. Lo mismo te decimos de esa chava, si la quieres busca y cuidala.

What I Want

Hi, my name is Edgar. I'm going to share how I can't hug, how much I miss my girl and can't kiss her. She's the reason why I'm in juvenile hall. She lives in Washington and it's weird when I call her.

I wish her the best and I ask God to help me get out the sooner or to help me reduce my sentence.

I wish to graduate from high school and give my mother my diploma to show her I can make it.

-Edgar, San Francisco

From The Beat: What's holding you that can prevent you from getting your diploma? Everything is possible in this life as long as you desire it with your heart and are alive. If you like this girl, go get her.

El Día De Las Madres

Ya viene el Día De Las Madres y no voy a poder nisiquiera darte las felicidades. Te prometo que cuando salga va a ser lo primero que voy a hacer. Sólo te quiero dar las felicidades y que pases un buen Día De Las Madres.

Te prometo que pronto madrecita, ya no voya ser como antes porque me he dado cuenta que todas las cosas que a mí me pasan a ti también te afectan.

Todo lo que me ha sucedido desde que me vine de mi país no ha sido nada. Venía arriesgando la vida y no es nada facil. Uno viene para encontrar una vida mejor y para ayudar a su familia. Lo que viene es que lo agarren y que lo metan a la cárcel.

No te preocupes madre mía porque tengo la esperanza en Dios que muy pronto voy a salir de este lugar. Adios madre mía.

From The Beat: Venistes aqui por una vida mejor que la que tienes ahorita. No deje que nadie tumbe tus esperanzas y sueños. Tienes gente que dependen de ti, de tu ayuda. Piensa en ellos antes de cometer un error. El camino es duro para que lo pierdas en un error.

Mother's Day

Mother's Day is coming and I won't be able to congratulate you. I promise that when I get out, it will be the first thing I'll do. I only want to thank you and to wish you had a Happy Mother's Day.

I promise my mother that I won't be the same because I've realized that whatever happens to me affects you as well.

Everything that has happened to me ever since I cam from my country, hasn't been good to me. I came here risking my life and it's nothing easy. We came here for a better life and to help our family. But it seems like we came here to get locked up and to put in a jail.

Don't worry my mother because I have the hopes God will help me get out soon. Bye my mother.

-Carlos San Francisco

From The Beat: You came here for a better life than the one you have now. Don't let anyone throw your hopes and goals away. You have people who depend on your help. Think about them before making a mistake. Coming here is hard to waste it over a mistake.

Para Ti Madre

Tú que me vistes nacer y crecer

Tú has dado tu vida por mí

Y yo no tenga con que pagarte

Lo que tú has dado por mi

Gracias madrecita.

Te amo.

Bueno aqui les voy a escribir un poco de mi vida. Bueno, ya llebo unos cuantos meses aqui en este lugar y no aguanto más. Lo peor que es que me van a deportar y no se cuando.

Ya viene un día especial para mi madre y quisiera estar con ella. Por eso, estoy sufriendo .

Yo aqui vine ayudar a mi madre y se que ustedes también y miren donde estamos. Estamos perdiendo el tiempo. Por eso ahora que salgamos, no importa para donde, para tu país o aqui, podamos ayudar a nuestras madres. Tú no sabes lo que ella está sufriendo. Espero que cuando tu leas esto, te ayude.

¡Que viva Honduras y la raza Latina!

From The Beat: Que lindo poema! Esperamos que se lo leas a ella personalmente. Esperamos que tú también hagas algo al respecto de tu madre. Venistes a este lugar por un propósito y el cual es ayudar a tus familiars. Es hora que te pongas a hacer a lo que venistes aqui.

To My Mother

You saw me born and grow up

You've given your life over mine

And I don't have how to pay you back

Thank you mother.

I love you.

Well, I want to write something about my life. I've been here a few months and I can't take it anymore. The worse thing is that I'm getting deported and I don't know when.

A special day is coming for my mother and I wish to be with her. That's why I'm suffering.

I came here to help my mother, and I know you came here for the same thing as well, and look at where we are. We are wasting out time. That's why when we get out, not matter where we get sent, back to our country or here; we can help our mothers. You know she is suffering. I hope this helps you when you read this.

¡Long live Honduras and my Latin people!

-Luis, San Francisco

From The Beat: That's a nice poem! We hope you read it to her personally. We also hope that you do something for your mother. You came here for a purpose that is to help your family members. It's time for you to start doing what you came here for.

Mis Pensamientos De Los Temas

El Día de las Madres es muy especial. Ese día es para los que tenemos madre. Espero que las sepamos valorar.

Mi mejor illusion era estar libre ese día. Mala suerte donde vine a terminar, en la juvenil. Espero que no hagan cosas malas que algún día se tengan que arrepentir.

From The Beat: ¿La has sabido valorar tú? Es de imaginarse, si andas haciendo cosas negativas que te lleben a la cárcel, es muy obvio que terminaras en este lugar. ¿No crees?

My Thoughts About The Topics

Mother's Day is a special day. That day is for those who have their mothers with them. We hope we learn to appreciate them.

My best illusion is to be free that day. It's a shame where I ended up, in juvenile hall. I hope you don't do anything wrong that some day you can regret.

-Ribaldo, San Francisco

From The Beat: Have you valued your mother? It's very obvious that if you continue doing wrong things, you will end up in this place. Don't you?

Looking Towards A Drug-Free Future

By birth I'm Katherine Ann, but everyone calls me Katie. Born and raised in Hawaii Kai, it will always be my home. I didn't come to the Bay until I was seven or eight. It was really hard adjusting — the weather, how people acted, and lemme tell you, I had a thick Hawaiian accent.

Things got better with time. I had a lot of friends and all, but life in middle school was tough. I had no breasts, my last name was Ho, and I got made fun of a lot. So, I first drank alcohol at eleven, smoked weed at twelve, did coke at thirteen, popped pills at fourteen, 'shrooms at fifteen, and crystal at sixteen. Now I'm here.

It wasn't all bad, though. I've had some of the best and some of the worst times on drugs. My violence and anger got me here. Assault with a deadly weapon got me expelled from school. I would never expect that innocent eight-year-old girl would be here.

Now looking back, I realize my whole life revolved around drugs. But don't get me wrong, I got plans. I'm not gonna be labeled a "druggie" or "mess-up." I'm gonna do it big, because someone taught me that everyone who's interesting has a past.

-Katie

From The Beat: Thank you for giving us this mini-version of your life. We hope you connect the dots between your escalating drug use (and particularly your alcohol consumption) and the assault and school expulsion that led you here. For all the "best times" you can remember on drugs, they take control of your thinking and actions, and take you down year-by-year. Now that you have a foundation of sobriety, build on it and move forward with a clear mind. (We hope you get back to Hawaii soon so you can re-experience the pleasure of swimming sober at Hanauma Bay.)

Love?

Who made love? To me, love is a deadly weapon worse than a gun. It has the power to make a person feel happy, wanted, and cared about. But it can make you feel sad, betrayed, suicidal, angry and fooled.

When your lover is with you, you feel happy, but does the other feel the same? She can say she loves you, but she really don't. She can cry and cry, but they're fake tears. If she loved you, would she lie and cheat? If you're in love, shouldn't you feel happy, not sad?

People use love nowadays to have sex to get what they want. Forget love. I will never love again. I don't even like the word. For those in love, good luck. But for those who love for the wrong reasons, be careful how you end it.

-Casper

From The Beat: Most of us have been hurt by love, Casper, but that doesn't mean we'll never experience it again. The mysterious thing about love is that you can declare that you'll never fall again, but when that special chemistry clicks between you and another person, you'll forget all the pain love put you through in the past, and simply enjoy the warm flush of euphoria love brings — at least when it's young and fresh. We hope you'll leave yourself open to the possibility that you will, again, love and be loved.

Oldies Calm Me Down

I like to listen to oldies. That's what I slap in the trunk. I think the difference between oldies and the music my peers listen to is that oldies calm you, put you in a better mood. The other music unsettles me, makes me hyper, like when I'm in the room, stressing out my mind, oldies help me think about better days to come.

-Eight Ball

From The Beat: Who are your favorite "oldie" artists? Do you have a particular song or group that you like listening to more than others?

Gang Life

Gangs... What are gangs? If you're a member of a gang, red or blue, North or South or anything else, and you by chance happen to come across and read this piece, I want you to think, think really hard and ask yourself, "What has this life of struggle brought to you?"

If you're really serious about being a gang member, answer yourself this: "What does it all mean to you? Does it mean anything at all? Or is it in fact just something stimulated to create money for the government?"

You see, I, myself once belonged to a gang, not too long ago. I believed in my cause, like both sides do. I dedicated my life to my 'hood. I even spent years incarcerated behind bars to defend my crazy ways. I've lost homies to the grave, and to the pen. I found any reason whatsoever to hate the other side, my "rivals," when, in fact, it was self-hatred I was holding, hate for myself, because I didn't know myself. So I used any chance I could to blame things on someone else, like the government, rival gang members, and anything else I could think of.

Although whether the government may or may not have anything to do with it, it gives me no excuse. After all, I made the ultimate decision to do or not to do, to be or not to be. I only wanted to belong, like most kids my age do. I wanted to be cool, get all the girls, and get the respect and dignity I felt I deserved, when all those things I could have earned, doing something different.

Now that I think back on the years I've wasted, I could have really been someone. I still can and my past is the more encouragement I need in order to do that. My past has made me who I am today.

To those who read this, know this: It's never too late unless you're dead, because you can be in the pen and still change your life. Hopefully you don't have to reach that point in order to understand, but for some, that's what it takes.

So, as you're reading this, you must be thinking, "Damn, this guy's a punk!" But when some of the hardest, most "downest" gang members drop out every day, does that make them a punk? No! In fact, it makes them more of a man, as opposed to the followers who choose not to! Even though I used to get excitement in the things I did when I did them, some of those things were shady and uncalled for, things I wouldn't want done to me.

Everything I've shared so far, at one time I did not know it because my mind was stuck in this invisible make-believe bubble. It wasn't until I questioned things, as well as myself. Then that bubble was able to pop and I was able to come to a realization, because before, my mind was programmed to only think about my gang and my 'hood. That's what came first in my life — not my family, because to me, that was my family, and I'm sure plenty of you feel the same way. But is it really true? No! It isn't a real family, 'cause a real family doesn't betray someone, but in the 'hood, if you mess up just one time, you're considered a no-good, "all bad," plus you what's called DPed (disciplined.) It's when your gang "family" beat up one of their own. Now is that love? To them it is, but that just how it is.

If you have made it this far and have not stopped reading this piece, I congratulate you for being open-minded. If you're still reading, it must mean you're giving what I've said at least a thought. Well, give it a deeper thought. You have nothing to lose and all this spare time on your hands.

Do you really want to go to prison? That's what's going to happen, 'cause if you're a real gang member, you have to kill one of your rivals. Then, most likely shortly after that, you will be caught and be behind bars to follow orders for the rest of your life, or the other path that some rival kills you, you die, he goes to prison. Either way you lose. Don't you get it?

One day, all will understand. Some will make a change, while others will ignore it, and for the unfortunate, it will be too late! Which category will you fall in? Only you can decide!

-Game

From The Beat: This is, simply, one of the very best descriptions of the attraction of gangs — especially to young boys who want to be "big boys" — and the devastating reality of what that life brings. We're not sure if you wrote this during a Beat workshop or in between, but we would love for you to identify yourself to us so we will know that we are in the presence of a first-class thinker, a person willing to engage in the extremely difficult task of self-examination and self-criticism (which most adults we know are afraid to do), and a first-class writer who is able to synthesize his thinking and is conclusions in a powerful piece of prose that stands among the best we've ever read. What do you see yourself doing from this point forward?

I first drank alcohol at eleven, smoked weed at twelve, did coke at thirteen, popped pills at fourteen, 'shrooms at fifteen, and crystal at sixteen. Now I'm here.

Corruption

In today's society, we, as "lower class citizens" (meaning not being part of the superior race or wealthy enough to fit in), feel as though there is corruption focusing mainly on police corruption. Police are allowed to carry guns, while our government has taken away our amendment right to bear arms.

Every time someone goes to jail, whatever the police says happened is what the courts believe. Even if maybe that's not really what happened, but just because they've gone to school or to a police academy, that makes their word gold. But in reality, they're not any different than anyone else. Therefore, I feel they don't deserve that much power.

Power equals corruption in the wrong hands. I'm not stating all police, but this is supposed to be a free country, yet we are treated like animals, locked away in cages.

The slavery days are supposed to be over, yet they're not. If you stop to analyze things, who's in jail? It's the same people who were slaves in the slavery days. Coincidence or is it destiny — destiny the corrupted government has set up for us?

It's the same old world order we are supposed to be trying to get away from. Yet it's the new world order with a different cover, a different name. Corruption continues as long as we allow it to!

-Freddy

From The Beat: Like we said, we love having you back in The Beat, even though we hate having you back in the hall! This piece tells everyone why we love having you in The Beat. We won't get into the 2nd Amendment discussion (except to say that citizens still have a right to bear arms, only with some limitations). But we will say that we think your analysis of police corruption is right on the money! More than 100 years ago (1887) a British historian named Lord Acton wrote: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." He was right then; you are right now!

Music

Music is something I can move with. I'm showing my dad some of my favorite rap musicians, and he's lovin' it. I show him tons of artists from my I-Pod, and he picks his favorites, so I show him more.

We're making dinner together in the kitchen and he selects three Six Mafia, Jay-Z, and Andre Nickatina. I show him, "Stay High," "Big Pimpin'," and "Fears of a Coke Lord." Then I show him my favorites from Tech N9ne, Atmosphere, and Bone Thugs in Harmony. I tell him about Tech N9ne's struggles as an artist. His failures as a father, and a faithful husband, because he can't help but fall into the many temptations that come along with the lifestyle of an entertainer. I tell him how far he's come without a major label behind his name (#1 Underground Rap Artist) and how much I respect him because of how fatally devoted he is to his occupation and true he is to himself. I tell him how much I like Atmosphere's music, because he raps about topics everybody can relate to, and he raps about how much of a regular guy he is. I explain how it captures me, because it's so raw and real...

The steaks are done and my dad listens to my rap albums well into the night with me. He loves it and plays an I-Pod every night when we make dinner together. I'm surprised at how much he concentrates and listens; for once my dad is baffled. A few nights later he tells a dinner guest of his how much he admires my taste in music. I smile and reflect on my dad's initially baffled face.

-M

From The Beat: This is one of those heart-warming pieces we hardly ever get a chance to read in The Beat. We love it. We think the relationship you're building with your dad over your taste in music is a rare and wonderful thing, and we admire you for taking the time with him. Does he ever try to get you to listen to the music of his youth? Which of his oldies do you like?

Just Think About It

Hell, we have all had it hard. It may not seem like it, but we all grew up in some kind of projects. I live in poverty. I don't have no father in my house. I'm not asking for sympathy. Every brown face and black face has a story, many times a gruesome story. But we have to get over it, no matter how bad it might be.

We have to recreate our families and build our communities again. It does and seems hopeless. Many times I get depressed, but I move on, because I have to. God requires this from me.

I do know something: Where there are drugs there can be no love. There can be no family. Drugs rob every person, man, woman and child of their beauty. Drugs turn people into animals who can only respond to instincts. Drugs are so powerful they eradicate the God in both the taker and giver. I know many drug-related people.

The contradiction, (maybe I'll find out after death), is that behind these walls seem to be the majority of black men, brown men, and, increasingly, women. The tall, the dark, the brown, the beautiful. But how do we get men and women before they are hunted like foxes and trapped like rats and treated like ants, to understand the concept of unity, working, building, living together — the best that you have to offer instead of the least and the easy?

Do I think I'm better than you? No. I know in many ways that we are all brilliant. Therefore... In life we make choices, conscious decisions to move left or right. We reap the rewards and/or disasters of the choices we make, do you feel me?

-Ben Davis

From The Beat: Oh yeah, we feel you completely. There is so much wisdom and insight in this piece, it naturally leads us to wonder how you came to be locked up. But never mind, locked up or free, you have much to teach (as you have much to learn). Did the consciousness you express so well here develop after you were caged or before? How has your thinking progressed to this point that you are able to write something so deep and so right? And what does all this mean for you and your future?

Fact

I hate people! I hate life! I hate God! I hate the world!

People do things that make me mad, makes me want to do things only a serial killer would do. They cry about little things, worry about things and pray to something that's not real.

Life is a waste of time. It's too short to be happy about it. Nothing ever lasts long enough to enjoy. At the end you die. No matter what you do while you live life, you die. Life is pain and pain is life. Once you die, that's when the pain stops. So all you're really doing is living to die.

God, if he is real, then he's the one to blame. We suffer while he watches. Some pray to him; he never answers. We sin on purpose, so why should we ask him for forgiveness? Humans punish humans, not God.

The world is the ugliest place to live. Humans act like the dominant creatures, but the truth is, they're not. The world is scarred by our creations. The drugs, pollution, chemicals, buildings and population will end the world.

-Casper

From The Beat: Even if death is the ultimate destination for us all, the journey matters! Yes, life is pain, but it's also joy, laughter, good food, supportive relationships and other things that mitigate the pain, that make the journey worthwhile. When you honestly examine your own experiences, are there not examples of laughter and joy, of achievement and pride? Be careful about making judgments about the meaning of life from the snapshot of your life today. It may be hard to believe that things can change, but change is a certainty — only the nature of the change and how it comes about is in doubt. So, whether there's a god or not, we urge you to have faith in tomorrow...

I Can't Call It

I can't call it, man. Well, you know they got a young player caught up in this system. They banned young ninjas every day from the streets. Them people playing filthy. This shhh wild.

Man, I been in here for the last eight months, an' to keep it real, it don't even feel like it. But now it ain't nothing, you feel me? An' if you don't, then... you know what I mean? Keep yo' head up?

-Ju

From The Beat: How could losing your freedom and having to take orders from strangers all day be "nothing"? As long as "it ain't nothing," then there's no reason for you to change anything, since you're comfortable with the consequences. Or, do you think you can continue as in the past without facing the consequences you faced in the past?

Cemetery Night

One night I decided to go smoke a cigarette in a cemetery. While I'm walking, I start to see shadows from the corner of my eye. I felt something run behind me, so I stopped. I looked to my left without moving my head, so only my eyes moved. I seen a black figure jump from one wall of a building to the other. It went right through the wall like a ghost. Then I seen another, then another. Could it be the same one?

I kept walking, ignoring the moving shadows. I got to the cemetery. It was foggy all around the headstones. It was like something out of a horror movie. I walked to a grave that pops up from the ground a little, so I could sit down.

I sit, then reach to my pocket and pull out a brand new pack of Marlboro cigarettes. As I begin to open it up, I hear the sound of somebody walking. "It's probably a homeless looking for a place to sleep at," I thought. As I light my cig up, I see a figure in all black, walking towards me. As it gets closer, I notice it's wearing a black hoodie sweater and looking down, as if trying to hide its face with the hood over its head.

I take a puff, then another, off the cigarette. The smoke gets in my eyes. I rub my eyes real quick. When I open them up. The figure's standing six feet from me. I blinked, then there's hundreds of them all around me.

"What you want?" I say to them. They all look up. The skin on their heads is grey, and where their eyes and ears should be, are sowed up with bloody strings.

Then I wake up.

-Casper

From The Beat: Did you actually experience this dream when you were sleeping? Do you think it's significant that these "monsters" did nothing to threaten you even though they could have? When you woke, were you afraid? Do you ever have good dreams? About what?

F-2

I wake up to Rush on my intercom. I'm mad as hell,

'Cause yo' boy Creeper still in jail.

She talkin' some mess for me to take my meds.

It's 6:50, she must by psycho

Or maybe just stupid for thinkin' I might go.

I cussed her out. She gave me distance. Pressed her body alarm for quick assistance. Now punk staff want to do it the rough way. One ISM, two GS's is what it take to cuff Creeps.

Straight to F-2 for two weeks.

Twenty-three hours in my room, but it ain't no thang.

I still got myself to talk to, so I'm cool in the game.

Got no pencil in the room, so there be no writing to my main.

Bustin' down how my big homies do in the pen.

Probably gone go there, 'cause Creeps only gets deeper and deeper in the game.

Can't stop. I don't want to.

All I really want to do is outsmart the law, so I can make it to the top, too.

With the few that did. How did they get there?

It's 'cause the fog put them on game ever since they was small.

Of course there will be a time when you fall, but when you come back to stand, you stand tall.

The only ones who make it in this foggy fog life are toughs who stay true to the game at a young age. This is real. When I do something, I do it for reals. This is my life. Take the good with the bad. Creeper lives for the thrills.

-Creeper

From The Beat: If Creeper is living for the thrills/ He will only continue to eat bitter pills/ For every OG "that did it" that you say you've found/ We can show you 100 more permanently underground/ Even rigged games in Vegas give you better odds/ So, if this is your choice, you'd better get used to male bods/ We know these words you'll read, but you won't feel/ And that's too bad, 'cause this is truly what's real!

The Wind Felt So Cool

It ain't fair that I'm here

I wouldn't have got caught if I wouldn't have drank some beer

I was arrested walkin', actin' a fool

I just remember the wind hitting me and it felt so cool

-La Guera

From The Beat: If you were drunk and acting the fool/ Should you not have to answer to some rule?/ If your being here just isn't fair/ Then what should be done, and where?

Partners In Crime

Through thick and thin we write to The Beat Within

We had our ups an' downs, smiles and frowns

But no mater what, we come out strong and try not to do wrong

We're partners in crime, 'til the end of time

-Henny Baby, Shorty, Flaca

From The Beat: Instead of "partners in crime," Why not restrict yourself to "partners in rhyme"? When you write a piece put together by three minds/ We expect a lot more than just four lines!

Slaps

The music I hear makes me go dumb

'Specially when you pop an' jus' feel numb

The beats all be soundin' sick wid it

What is that these older people don't get?

But if I'm not feeling in the mood

I put on some oldies that make me feel good

So it don't matter, old or new.

Yet the ones that slap are only a few.

-A Homegirl

From The Beat: We wish you had given us some specific examples both of the beats that make you go numb, as well as some of those oldies that make you feel good.

My Biography

I'm just a 17-year-old East Bay ridah. My life is purple, Bud, drank, money and sex. It's real hard in this world to do good; everybody is on the hustle. My hustle is gettin' money the "legal way," and that's all there is to it.

It first started okay when I was getting suspended from elementary school. Then it went to smokin' weed behind my boy's house. Then I started gettin' in trouble with the cops. From that point on I was in the system, doin' thirty days here and doin' two months there. Then I upgraded to Camp. From Camp I went to a group home in Visalia. I was caught when I ran from the group home one month later. Now I'm doin' 460 days in my cage.

One last thing I got to say about the system—it's 90% bullshhh and only 10% is showing up.

-Italiano

From The Beat: We're most interested in that "legal way" you describe as your hustle. What do you have in mind? With 460 days under your belt in here, it would seem to us that a change is called for. Is that what you mean? If you were to write the rest of this story — life after juvenile hall — what would you say?

Laughing At Cowards

People say many things about this man. He this, he that. They don't say nothing to him. I wonder why they say things behind his back, but not in his presence, so it just makes him laugh most of the time.

Cowards put on different faces to different people, but when he's around, it's a familiar face. So people saying things about him, he just thinks, "Thuggin' ain't easy, so go on, brush yo' shoulders off."

He's not affected by words, because actions speak louder than words. And to those people who talk, you know who you are, so front.

-Ben Davis

From The Beat: Well, if you can laugh in the face of ignorance and cowardice, then you will be able to get through a lot of difficult situations on the outs where ignorance and cowardice thrive. On the other hand, if "thuggin' ain't easy," then why keep doing it? Surely, there are easier ways to make it through life than this! (Everybody puts on different faces for different people, whether they are cowards or not... including you!)

Waiting...

As it sit in my cell from waking up
Waiting... Waiting... for the door to open...

Sitting in court in front of the judge

Waiting... Waiting... to get sentenced

At school, doing nothing

Waiting... Waiting... for school to end

Standing in line at central dining

Waiting... Waiting... to get my tray

Locked up, doing time

Waiting... Waiting... for freedom.

Living life on earth

Waiting... Waiting... to get killed

Now you're dead

Waiting... Waiting... for what?

-Casper

From The Beat: It's a good question, Casper — what are you waiting for? And more important, why wait? Why not take control of your life in a way that gives you goals to achieve, destinations to reach, so that you will always know what you're waiting for?

Back Again

Back again to these four white walls. Violated probation, drunk in public, 'bout to be eighteen. I'll be out soon.

They ain't trippin' that hard. They just want me to get my GED and pay my restitution fees. I might be out before September. Can't wait to get back out there rollin' with the four that's my three other patnas. We did some shhh together, now we're the Fantastic Four.

We was at a party. Vatos set trippin', tryna start some funk—fifteen guys on four. We rollin' in a scraper, floatin' on 22s, got beat in the trunk, make the car look low. Damn, can't wait to get out.

-Freddy

From The Beat: Come on Freddy, get it together. You don't belong in this place for one more wasted minute! If the Fantastic Four are going to roll, make sure you don't roll into a locked cage!

My Life Is A Struggle

I start doing wrong, stress builds up.

As I do wrong, people start looking at me wrong.

I have lived life like a rollercoaster.

I haven't been at Great American in almost four years,

But seems like I can never get off this ride.

I have my ups and downs

My zig zags and loops.

When I'm on the ride, going up, I'm doing good.

But then bad luck comes and the ride goes down.

When I hit the zig zag, I'm on the edge of a corner, doing wrong

But getting away with the bad things I do.

The loop comes in the end.

I hit it and my world I'm in flips upside down.

This the life I struggle every day.

-Mickey

From The Beat: To some extent, Mickey, everybody's life could be described as a rollercoaster ride, although your ups and downs may be more extreme than most. Since the ride has taken you down (for now), how do you see your life progressing when you get out of here?

Choices

Being locked up is a waste of time. I think of what I could have been doing with my time instead, like making money and spending time with my family. I know I need to make better choices in order to move forward. So I'ma just try to be smarter... I have no other choice.

-Cesar

From The Beat: We know you asked that we not post this piece, Cesar, but it's too good not to share with our Beat family. Can you give us some examples of what it means to you to "be smarter"?

I Hate The System

Damn, I miss my mom and my girl

My mind is goin' in a big whirl

I thought I was gon' do my time here

But freedom ain't nowhere near

They want to send me outta state

The damn system I freakin' hate

Is nothin' like a G, I'll serve my time

And I'm sure everything will turn out fine

-Giselle

From The Beat: When you hate the system enough, you'll stop coming back! When you say "everything will turn out fine," we wish you'd describe that "fine future" and how you plan to get to it.

Who Am I?

I don't know who I am. What is my purpose to live life? I know I'm not a lover. It never worked out the first time. I can't be a good person because it doesn't feel right.

I'm not here to do God's work, because he ain't real. I don't want kids, so I can't be a family type. I don't want friends, because they die. I don't want a job, because it takes time away from my short life.

I like the gang life I live. I like to do bad things, break the law. I like to see blood and guts. I like to go to war with guns. I would like to see the world end soon. I have bad thoughts; I think negative.

I can't sleep most off the time. I like to roam the streets at night. I think death is the only answer to everything. I hate the world. I hate people. Who am I? Can you tell me?

-Casper

From The Beat: We can tell you this much: you are a very sensitive person, a very talented writer, a person who can't escape his thoughts and experiences, a man whose heart can't reconcile the reality he sees and lives with the promises of what life is supposed to be — and someone worth saving. We can't tell you if god exists, or the devil, but we can tell you that you exist, and that your existence means something.

Will There Ever Be Peace On Earth?

Question: When will there be peace on earth?

Answer: When earth itself will be alone

-Mimi

From The Beat: You may be right that true peace can only come with the end of life itself. In that case, we don't want true peace...

*I'ma just try to be smarter...
I have no other choice.*

My Autobiography

I'm eighteen years old now, a legal adult, and I still haven't experienced the outside world as an adult. This is because of my past mistakes that I truly regret. But everything happens for a reason and I know that my future is looking good and I will be successful.

-Mejia

From The Beat: You have an entire lifetime ahead of you to experience "the outside world as an adult." It's time to put away childish things (those mistakes you regret) and take your place in society. When you describe your future as "looking good," what do you envision?

The Monster

Nobody knows me... the real me, to be exact. You might know the things I like or the things I feel, but not my inner thoughts. They don't know what I can do to them.

The monster in me is waiting to come out to do its evil. I keep it in until the day comes to let the monster lose to do its evil. It wants to bring the world to an end, no mercy all around.

It's worse than the devil himself, crazy to the bone. I hide it underneath all this skin. It's been hidden too long. It suffers when I do. It's made when I'm made. It's tired of it all.

Once I'm free, the monster will bring it all to an end.

-Casper

From The Beat: We're not sure you wanted this piece published, but it's just too powerful (and disturbing) for us to leave out. This monster that you describe, does it shed tears? Does it laugh? Does it speak to you? Has anyone outside yourself ever tried to communicate directly with "the monster"? In the deepest depths of your heart, do you want to be the monster, or to be rid of it? If you learned of a strategy to starve the monster, would you follow it?

Words That Describe Me

Loving

Angry

Hurt

Real

Ready

Down

Sister

Daughter

Wifey

Friend

Vain

Self-contained

Lost

-Wifers

From The Beat: Add: Intelligent, Thoughtful, Honest, and — most important of all — Dedicated to change!

Your Hands Come Down To Pick Me Up

In a boat on the River Styx

Smelling daisies,

Your hands come down to pick me up

Like a ball, you kick my limp figure across the sky

Through the clouds against a mountain

I chop it down with the edge of my hand

Exploding with anger

Crumbling down back to the river

-Jen

From The Beat: We wish we could understand all the references in this fine poem. Who is in the boat on the River Styx? Whose hands come down to pick you up. Who is exploding with anger, and why? Good poetry should make readers think, and this is good poetry. Thank you.

She Used to Be an Angel

She used to be an angel
That's before all the traffickin'
Sometimes I wish we could go back again
When we were kids we played karate and practiced on
pissy mattresses
We used to go together when goin' together was
happenin'
She used to make me mad, but it was nothin' to get me
to laugh again
I made her cry once, but that was truly an accident
She was my first crush, first kiss, first love
We were so close; sometimes I miss her so much
She used to let me see her naked but never would let me
touch
And when I let her see me naked, all she would do is
blush
That was young love
Now she's into sellin' drugs
She got addicted to the money, the hustling, and the
thuggin'
I swear she used to be an angel
Now all she's into is fast money
You would think she was singed wit' cash money
The way she's stuntin' on these broads and busters it's
so bananas
You'll never catch her slippin'
She's always strapped with a cannon
Yeah, we still mess wit' each other, but it's business,
never personal
She's on that Queen Shhh conceited female
But I still love her though
She ain't the same girl next door that I used to know
'Cause now she's traffickin' that coca and stackin'
c-notes
In love wit' herself
She never needed a hero 'cause drugs sell itself
She just movin' it by the kilo
Connected in Miami, New Jersey, and Mississippi
And when she comes back out to Cali on business she'll
come and get me
We be ridin' in her six blowin' sticks of that hazel
She has the same pretty face without the halo
Because she used to be an angel...

It's always a good day when we hear from Bron'shi Jackson. He is writing us from Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA. Bron' Shi took some time to put together a few creative pieces for all the readers out there to dwell on. Without any more interruptions, give it up for Bron' Shi.

Find Me In The Beat Within

Put your ear to the ground and listen to the world cry
Or lose your life quicker than a victim in a drive-by
We can change, but we don't try
Instead of stayin' behind the wheel we hop out and let
the ghost ride
I ain't a rapper, I just ghost write
And I don't gang bang, so I see enemies on both sides
I got my momma's love and my father's pride
And all I can do is pray I make it home before they both
die
I ain't seen 'em in a long time
It's like I'm waitin' for my freedom, but I'm standin' in a
long line
Broken dreams are like friends of mine
I'm tryin' to hold 'em all together, but they fall apart
when I close my eyes
Behind the wall and I can't escape
'Cause I ain't doin' no kind of actin' and this is nothin'
like Prison Break
These kids have hearts, but it's hard to touch 'em
They build themselves reputations, but it's made up wit'
no structure
You can't help 'em if you don't love 'em
That's why the judge and the DA treat these kids like
they're all trouble
My heart goes out to the young and ignorant
I know I can't touch 'em all, but I pray you feel me if
you're readin' this
Just hold your head up to holla back
You can find me in The Beat Within.

*You can't help 'em if you don't love 'em
That's why the judge and the DA treat
these kids like they're all trouble*

The Ghetto's Got Me Crazy

The ghetto's got me crazy,
But my daddy raised me a man
I keep a pad in my lap and a pen in my hand
I ain't got no friends because they hate all my fans
They say I'm gettin' like I'm Mr. High and Mighty, like I'm
the King of the land
I get done what you don't understand
My lil' momma stressin' on me every day like she ain't
part of the plan
I can't explain it because these streets are callin'
I'm knee deep in the gutta pushin' that butta for the fiends
that want it
I tell ya this ghetto's got me crazy
But my momma told me the truth
"Son, you a man now with nothin' to lose, so run loose,
boy, and do what you do."
So I put rock on my block, tote glocks and explode in the

bath
I get high blowin' dro in my coupe
And I'm nice to them girls to be a pimp
But I'll take half of their loot
They love me 'cause I'm a passionate dude
Quick to smoke up the duch and drink half the drank
before I pass it to you
I tell ya this, ghetto's got me crazy
Harassin' and flashin' on bastards
Because I'm all about my cash and I know that this life
won't last
And I'll end up dead or in jail
I heard it all before
Ain't shhh you can tell me
'Cause I'm loyal, but they still want to kill me
God forgive 'em for they know not what they do
That's why I'm still here livin' every day like it's my last
It's either hustle or death
So I'll hustle hard until my last breath.

Aren't What They Appear to Be

I want to take the time to talk about my lil' stint in San Quentin. I just want the youngsters to know that the homies aren't what they appear to be and that they are fake as hell as well as falling apart. A lot of big homies are dope fiends and will sell or backstab their best friend or family for a big shot of dope. That's pretty low.

I've been a dropout since 2004. I went back to San Quentin on a violation on March 28, 2007. Well, I infiltrated and went to mainline. Upon my arrival I did the lil' routine that you're supposed to do with the homies. A couple of days later my paperwork checked out and I was cleared for normal program and to walk the yard. In exactly one week "La Casa" needed my assistance in a removal. I was going home in four months, but if I refused, they would have whacked me. The homies are inconsiderate bastards so I participated in the removal. The guy got his face sliced and beat up pretty bad. After everything was said and done, I felt bad.

You see, I got done dirty by the homies in my county jail. Instead of looking and checking my paperwork, they went by another homie's word, one that I had funk with. So here in Santa Rosa they go by hearsay; everything is backwards, you know. Anyway, the person we removed was an undercover something. I went to the SHU for the removal. I did an investigation on my own; the dude that got removed was a righteous and solid individual who had crimes that weren't weird, so his paperwork checked out and everything checked out. The whole thing was over drugs. How pathetic is that? I don't even do drugs, so you can imagine how pissed I was. I had four months and they wanted me to do this 'cause of drugs. Now, that's childish and lame.

So, I got to go back for a new term and I should have only four months left due to the fact of my credits. Well, I got 11 months left on my SHU term. So, since I got that, it affects my release date, all over drugs. Yeah, I messed up and, of course, I made the wrong decision, but we all make mistakes in life; whether we learn from them is what's important. The moral of this story is, think before you act. What you do now can affect you later on down the road.

Also, the homies are snakes, two-faced cowards. If you're gonna play the game and someone asks you to do a removal, ask him if he'll do it with you. 99.9% will tell you no. That should tell you something. Just make your next choice your best choice. I hope the youngsters learn from my mistakes and don't make this jail and prison stuff a lifetime thing. It's not worth it... trust me.

Silent, held at the Main Adult Detention Facility in Santa Rosa, CA, sends these words to our young readers to let them know what's real. The poem following the essay is written for and dedicated to the woman who has stood by his side this whole time.

*Just make your next choice
your best choice.*

How I Feel

Roses are red, violets are blue
My feelings are only for you
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust
Don't be afraid, it is I you should trust
My feelings for you grow stronger and stronger each
passing day
Every day I sit here and pray that by my side you will stay
With you I see a future
I got to admit, you are the most beautiful creature
You had my heart from the start
Please, Kayla, do not depart
I can honestly say I love you
What I feel deep inside is true
What must I say, what must I do
To proclaim my love to you?
I wanna hold you in my arms
And partake all of your charms
I think about your laughter
And everything we did led us to another chapter
Together we shall not fall
We'll stand tall through this all
If it's hard for me to express my feelings
The reason being is because my heart is what you're
stealing
I wish I didn't commit this crime
I thank God up above that you're mine
Just know that you got someone till the end
Through the thick and thin.

MICHAEL CABRAL

And I Loved You So Much

It's gotten so complicated
We're both saying
"I just wanna be friends"
Yet here we are lying in bed
With soft music playing
Contemplating our fates
Love is destined for greatness
But what we share is fake
I know you don't love me
I don't love you either
But it hurts when you leave
Just not enough for me to leave her
Her, the girl in the picture
The girl I picked first
The girl for whom
I promised I'd always be there
I wish you would just leave
I wish you would never go
I wish she could understand

In this deceptively simple poem, young Michael Cabral writes of his destructive relationship with alcohol as if it is a failed love relationship, which, in a way, it is. What this young teen embraced as a loving companion destroys his real relationships, and yet, leaves him remembering how deeply he "loved" what he also hated. ("Wrap my hands 'round your neck.../ Squeeze.../ Kiss you deeply on the mouth./ Breathe..."). We don't have enough superlatives to describe the sensitivity, the intelligence and the literary skills Michael routinely shares with us from his cell at Salinas Valley State Prison.

My fear of forever alone
I should be 'shamed of myself
But I can't be
I'm growing emptier inside
But convinced you make me happy...
Now the last time I saw you
Was the first time I missed you
Didn't think I'd ever need you
Until I wasn't with you
Now she says she loves me
But I don't
I say that I love her too
But my love won't
It belongs too much to you
And I hate you for it

I wish I could pour it all out
But I can't afford it
Wrap my hands 'round your neck,
Squeeze...
Kiss you deeply on the mouth,
Breathe...
Soak up every once of you
Sink into your warmth
But wake up never next to you
And even she has stormed out
Create what you fear
Now the walls are grey
You've both gone away
And I loved you so much.

Long Live the Existence to Change Within

I'm an incarcerated prisoner being held in a California Security Housing Unit in Tehachapi. I have been within these walls of confinement for seven years now. I still reflect on my youth years as being in and out of juvenile hall... I was sent to do my first bid in Juvenile Detention Camp at the early age of sixteen or seventeen years old on a possession of marijuana charge. I still remember sitting in Juvenile Hall like it was yesterday, being away from my family who loved me and wanted to see me change my life from being a troublesome youth to a much better person. But, unfortunately, I was headed in a much worse predicament than the ones I took habit to indulging in relentlessly.

At the age of 18, the streets took its toll on me where I caught a murder that landed me behind these walls of confinement with a 50-years-to-life sentence. I've seen life move at a fast pace, which consisted of my past life ripping and running them streets blindfolded to reality which can come to a real conclusion fast, also if one ain't pre-cautious on the consequences that's behind every cause we dwell on in this world.

My message to youth who are coming up in this modern day era is that one must realize that we are the future leaders, educators, and peers who must lead by proper example for those who come behind. Living a life comes with experiencing the ins and outs, but one must be willing to make that transition for the uplifting of one's self, knowing we stand for much more than being labeled or categorized as a criminal within society. We have options in life that must be determined in order to achieve our objectives that must be achieved for the better of our future. I know at

Our next writer is writing to us from a Correctional Facility in Tehachapi, CA. Derryl is a new writer to The Beat Within. He sends us his story and views on change. Derryl's piece is a prime example of anyone that's willing to change. Because Derryl didn't always think the way he's thinking now. He matured over the years because he allowed himself to. Derryl is like a lot of you readers out there. He is a product of the street. He got caught for a serious charge and now after years of still giving in to his inner demon he's finally made a change to better himself and try to send a message to everyone out there. It's never too late to change, but don't wait till you hit behind these closed gates to change. So go ahead and give him a read folks.

first I thought I would never be able to change from the old me into the new me, which took years, indeed, to get that sense of true change instilled in me. It's about having the forbearance within the mind to control one's deeds in making all the right moves to progress further in life with the opportunities that one still has before the gates close and the doors lock.

I'm not impressed about my lifestyle within these concrete conditions I have endured over the years. I have caught stabbing assaults, which is why I'm housed in a maximum security, a.k.a. SHU, domain where one is held in complete isolation from the other prisoners who are deemed general population prisoners. One is confined 23 hours a day to a cell I call a cave because it's only one way in and one way out with artificial fluorescent lights in them. One goes to a cage yard for one hour, which looks like a dog kennel for humans. Being within prison comes with having to withstand the conditions they wage upon the mind. If one doesn't have a strong sense of self, one can become a tool of corrosion, which is detrimental on the mind, body, and soul as well. I want to leave the partakers of The Beat Within with that strong sense of change and to make the best out of existence there is possible!

E-MONEY

To Smile With Death

"The life of this world is nothing but futility and play. Verily, the abode of the after life most certainly is the original life."

"Every person will taste death. Thereafter will you all be returned to us."

(Quran: Surah Ankaboot)".

The only thing that's guarantee in life is death. The body we bathe and groom will one day be of eternal dirt just another delicacy to the creatures that crawls this earth. Survival eventually pass the baton to death surrendering with hopes that death will finish up its race in the form of spirit. Breathe is abused, raped, and then neglected, separating and divorcing itself from life and their agreed upon struggle.

I have had many encounters with death, but yet somehow always won, never failing to understand the famous saying "you can run but can not hide". I know death one day defeats us all for it's the true definition of consistent. Its lost is temporary but its victory is everlasting painting an eternal fear in the sky for the world to see.

I often wonder about the unknown hoping my thoughts prevail its existence, life after death that is. My worse fear is being stuck in an eternal darkness watching my spiritual eye burn through the ceiling of a casket. I know death comes for us all- but do god come for death?

I have watched many of men fall and I mean "didn't get up!" relying on the tear that has fallen from his eye for his grounds cushion, hoping the aroma of the blood stained concrete doesn't make his soul throw up. His thoughts is scattered in the streets stuck in the wonder of if this tragedy is going to be

Our next writer is sharing his work as a free man from our Beat office, right here in San Francisco, CA. E-Money has been there and done that - yes indeed he is one of the first Beat writers! He has been where you readers sit right now. He was in YGC, in the ol' max unit, BS, as a youngster and then moved on to the State Pen where he continues to touch lives as a prolific writer and teacher. The following piece you are about to read was written when E was up in San Quentin, mourning his grandfather's death, back in early 2007. As always, E's pieces are deep, as he always gives a lot of thought. Thank you E for being present in our lives each day. YOU give all of us hope, that we can succeed if we really want it.

an open or closed casket.

Years go by fast but days goes by even quicker. Before we know it we'll all be of age wondering where did yesterday go. For time stops for no one and we are all abroad its ship as it goes non-stop to the end of life. Some people jump over the edge- others accept their fate as it comes.

I no longer cry when death comes beside me to take my love ones! As a matter of fact I can't remember the last time I cried. I used to think it was because my heart was made of stone and feeling was often neglected, but now I realize death has sat at the table with me and served me bread, death has looked me in my eyes and smiled my way, death has given me life to conquer and cherish, death is with me everyday protecting its seed and allowing me to grow to one day be of it. Death is life and life is death. It is simply what gives the world balance. Maturity has taught me that tears are irrelevant in the presence of death when it has long ago been accepted. I will not fear to one day be able to smile and cry the tears of happiness in the presence of my ancestors through the gift of death.

"And, the life of this world is but play and amusement while the abode of the after life is best for those who fear (Allah). What, have you no intelligence?"

A Letter To You All

Hello Beat how's it going? Espero que bien(hopefully well) I'm doing good thank God. I received my second issue and as always it puts a smile on my face when I read the introduction and the topics. First off gracias, young homies and older camaradas (homies). Once again I extend my saludos(greetings) to each and every one of you, in hope of these little lines finding everyone in good health and in God's loving care.

Well I'm gonna write a little bit of myself and how I've found it hard to get out of this system... well this issue. It has a lot to do of how we were raised. Where we grow up and who are we surrounded by? Some of us have parents some of us have friends or family members that are in gangs or may be just caught up between the system! I was born and raised in West L.A. surrounded by drugs, gangs, graffiti etc. some of us witness killings, gunshots, prostitution, drug dealings. I happen to experience a little bit of everything. I remember being young. I say about eight I would see my tios (uncles) sporting nice shoes baggy pants creased up. He always had the ladies. As much as I was seeing, I was observing and little that I knew I started to be just like him.

I started wearing baggy clothes and I saw how much attention I got. It gave me a good thrill. I felt good in some way. It's hard to ever explain it. But from there on I committed my self. I started going home late. Moms would hit me but at times it didn't matter. At times I wouldn't go home. I really didn't know how much and I was too young to know where I was headed. I remember loved ones telling me where I could end up or what could happen but I never did listen.

I left my house at a young age. I started living with friends, girls, and from there on I fell in love. I fell in love to the streets and the attention. I fell in love in some type of way were I was committed and dedicated. I smoked weed and I would drink and from there on the addiction hit me at times. I was too young to be out in the streets and I would get stopped and at times end up at the stations. Moms had to pick me up I put her through so much I wish I could take it all back.

But yeah when moms would pick me up I would leave again. I had no self-control I would steal, rob, anything to get my hands on money. I got caught up many times. I went to Juvie (in Los Angeles) like eight times. I been to Sylmar, Los Padrinos and the one we all pretty much have gone and been through East Lake. I never really got punished. Most of the time it was just a slap in the hand and I would end up to the same thing. It was hard. Addiction is a big factor and that was a factor to my life. I went to two different camp programs got out and did the same.

I made a name for my self. I'm not proud of it but I did. I sold drugs and pimped the streets, had the ladies, and I mistreated them by selling their bodies. I made many enemies and many so called friends. I did just about everything. I had respect and honor. Which it took me no where. I dropped out of school. I got too deep in the game. It was hard. I got caught up at the age of 17 years old and I was sentence to seven years. One adult strike to state prison.

Our next writer is writing to us From a Correctional Facility in San Diego, CA. Ascencio is a new writer to the Beat Within. Ascencio is writing to The Beat Within with the hopes that some of you readers pay attention to his story. He grew up in the hood and knows the streets like many of you that are incarcerated at the moment. He's seen everything from pimping, to murder, to drug addictions, etc. There is no sugar coating when Ascencio tells his story. He wants all you young readers out there to know that his story can relate with many of you. And look where he's at now. No where to be proud of, but proud at the fact that he's trying to change his life for the better. Listen to what Ascencio is saying as he provides us with some friendly advice straight from his heart.

I could admit I was scared. I was afraid of never getting out. I was afraid where I was headed. When I first hit prison I left lost. I felt alone and I started thinking about all of my troubles. All or the opportunities I let go. I realized many things for a minute. It was hard for me I had no one there to support me. Every one was gone. I lost every ones trust. At times I would write and tell my mom I was sorry but that never didn't do anything. I used up all my lines when I was in the halls. For you young homies who are still doing these type of things, you should read this.

Well moving on, yeah it was hard. It took me about one year for me to get my family's attention and at times they wouldn't trust me. I made a name for myself in here and I only did that because I had nobody there but I realized so many things. I realized that in life we need our parents and love ones especially through these times. Another opportunity again all for not being smart and not using our brains I believe we all have some special type of talent. We just need to find it. I've changed for the better we all have opportunities. We just need to stop taking it for granted. There's no life in here. There's nothing to this place but violence and people wishing and praying for opportunities some of us have. How much time are we gonna give this system. The system is a cold grave. They want us to be locked up forever. Laws are getting strong and getting heavy. It's not fun anymore and there's no point to this.

We all hit loopholes. We all struggle. Life wasn't meant to be easy but God set it. I realized that the so-called friends are not there when times like these come out the way. I saw how difficult it is to work and make money. Prison taught me to be discipline and respect others. I'm deeply sorry for what I've caused but I have a story to tell, its hard but we can all put every thing to the side. We can all do it if we put our hearts and mind to it.

Education is the key to success. I've gotten educated through the system. I've used my time wisely but I've witnessed it's hard. There are many industries that offer their help for those who want a new life you should attend them and try them. I basically changed for my own good and my own sake. I've seen many inmates with life; those that never will have a chance like some of us do, to change our ways.

Well this is reality. This is the truth. Yeah it's hard but that's because we let it be. I do believe that there are those who are innocent, and just because we're convicts they set us up. Well now I wish you all the best of luck. Keep your heads up and open up the mind. Read, write and educated the mind. It helps you and as you get older you will start to realize it. God bless you all your families. Con Amor y Carino. (with love and affection).

I do believe that there are those who are innocent, and just because we're convicts they set us up. Well now I wish you all the best of luck.

Undoing The Do Over's

There's a good Russian saying, "Measure seven times before you cut once...", meaning that I should think what I'm doing before I do it, since second chances are hard to come by.

I wish life would be as simple as writing a piece for The Beat. Made a mistake? Just cross it out, erase it, delete it, and start new... When I first began writing for the magazine, I used to compose a "rough draft", go over it, outfit it will all sort of wordy witticism, and so forth. It was planned and choreographed. Then I'd have my cellie read it, to let me know if anything needed to be fixed. Only afterwards, would I seal the envelope, and let it fly. It was a "piece from the heart", all right, but it was shaped and fixed to fit a format.

Now, I just write, and whatever I write - that's what's going into the envelope, and The Beat. It is what it is, and it is more authentic because I'm unable to revise my foolishness. That's how life is, and instead of "carving out" a perfect piece, I simply cross myself with the sign of the Cross, ask God for wisdom, and look at the hand-written prayer, written fifteen hundred years ago for dullards like me, who undertake all kinds of folly on paper.

The translation of the prayer posted on my wall goes like this:

"Lord, grant this unworthy one the grace of wisdom, in order to discern what is pleasing to You, and for me beneficial; and not only to discern, but to fulfill it, so that I may not be led astray and cleave to what is empty, so that I may be compassionate to those who suffer, and be gracious with the fallen."
(St. John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople)

That is my prayer precisely because I frequently fail to "Discern what is pleasing and beneficial", and fulfill things after which I have to repent, apologize, and do things over. That's life, and life teaches life (if we're willing to learn). I wish I could eliminate my "do overs", but...

Well, there's always tomorrow. My work, both in the mornings and in the afternoon, always places me around other people in my unit. Whether I like it or not, I have to deal with other people, listen to others, hear their issues or complaints (in the same way you're hearing - or reading - me right now), and know how to deal with the various (mostly unpredictable) situations that come my way. Unfortunately, I don't know how to do this or that, and can't foresee what will come up. And so, at the beginning of each day, I ask the

Our next writer is writing to us from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, Ca. Mikhail is no stranger to The Beat Within as he splits knowledge through our pages of the magazine every week. Markhasev is an incredibly talented writer and most important of all good hearted man that's trying to get into all you reader's minds and hearts. Listen to his potent writings as he explains his trials and tribulations and teaches us moral lessons. We all know that we can't undo the do over's, so give it up for Markhasev as he graces us with his wisdom one more time!

Lord for wisdom in dealing with everyone, and that I may not put Him to shame by some silly outburst.

And outbursts come like I.E.D.'s on the side of Baghdad Street. Misery loves company, and some love to pass theirs on to others. Michael McKinney in Florida wrote about this in one of the issues, and he was on point. We cannot change what goes on around us, but I don't want to be controlled by my surroundings, and want to change the way I respond to things and to people. It's the only way to retain a bit of dignity and humanity - to treat another as a human being, even when his/her actions are undignified.

That isn't simply ethical or idealistic hogwash that looks good only on paper. This is my daily reality, and my growth both as a Christian and a man. In the past, I've failed to treat others the way I'd want to be treated, so the Lord, in His mercy gave me the rest of my life in prison to work on it. It's not about others, but about me becoming what I ought to be, through my treatment of others. This is the Gospel! If I receive God's love from above, then I need to love those around me, or else I'm fooling myself. And I've done enough of that already...

Life isn't choreographed, but it's uncut and in-your-face. It's not a "box of chocolates" but a "cat in a bag", and we know so pathetically little about what's in the bag! But there is a God, the Maker of all things visible and invisible, and He hears my weak prayers for myself, my family, the men in my unit, and even for those against whom I often rage in my mind.

I'm unable to undo what is done, and I can't control others. I'm not supposed to. My primary responsibility is to control myself, irrespective of what others are doing. And if I spend the day doing that, then I won't have the time to worry about what so-and-so is doing I'll be busy living my life, and not someone else's. I'll close with this simple analogy.

I think of myself as a mental patient in an insane asylum. I'm bonkers, and the only way for me to regain my mind is by helping others in my ward, as long as no one loses their mind because of me. I'm, by God's grace, on my way to recovery.

Because of You

Because of you
My nights are not cold
Because of you
Love live in my soul
Because of you
My days are bright
Because of you
The bond we have is tight
Because of you
I learned how to build
Because of you
Pain doesn't have a chance to live
Love is the greatest of all
So, now I take this compassion
And keep my head high and stand tall
Blessed those who love with a resurrection
Cause a bonded relationship never
Production a negative reaction.

LESTER OLIVER

Our next writer is writing to us from Columbia Correctional Institution in Lake City, Florida. Lester is not new to The Beat Within as he often sends us his pieces periodically from time to time. So give Lester a read folks!

*Because of you
Love live in my soul
Because of you
My days are bright*

We must educate our youth and strengthen our communities and get true justice for all, under and through the law.

Our next writer is writing to us from a Correctional Facility in Vacaville, Ca. Anthony Baker, housed in Vacaville, has written this tribute in remembrance to his friend, Willie Hayes II, who passed away on February 11, 2008, after doing 36 years in prison. Anthony also has a few other pieces he would like to share with all the readers and writers out there. Anthony is a very inspirational writer as he talks about reaching for the stars and getting ahead in life no matter what situation you're in. So go ahead and give Anthony a read!

Over These Prison Walls We Shall Fly

Greetings to all the people of color, mainly our youth. I want to share a thought with you all. I am heart and soul in the movement to unite our youth all over the world even though I speak from behind prison walls. I stride in this cause because it is most necessary that we should show the youth of this country that we who have, by our martyrdom under the lash and by our heroism on the field of battle, survived through unity, have shown forbearance beneath an overwhelming burden of injustice. By our very own submission to the laws of the native lands, which we have proven over and over, we can and will survive as long as we maintain unity.

Also, I want to point out to our youth today, there is no separation of the people of color from those of white America and it is our duty to prove to this country and the youth of the world that we are and will continue to work with the complete interests of all people of color at large when we protect against the crimes and injustice meted out to our youth of any class and color. Please note, our very history conclusively proves that any attempt to degrade any portion of our heritage has and will always be fraught with more danger to the oppressor than our youth.

So in closing, allow me to state a fact. We must educate our youth and strengthen our communities and get true justice for all, under and through the law. This is the only safe course to pursue for all youth and for where it might make right. The brute strength will supersede intelligence to control our communities. So, to all youth of the world, unite and dare to struggle, dare to win, knowledge is power, our words are the only weapon we need.

Farewell To A Comrade

Farewell, farewell, farewell!
My loving friend, farewell!

Farewell, old comrade in the cause,
You leave me here and journey on;
And if you never more return, farewell.

I'm bound to you there.
One word before we part.
If we should never see you again,
I do suppose you will continue to push on with our
struggle,
Yes.

Farewell, old comrade, farewell, farewell!
When shall our sorrow subside?
When shall our troubles be ended?
When to the bosom of the Lord will we be conveyed,
To the mansions of joy and bliss?

Farewell, old comrade,
farewell, my old friend, farewell...

Today's Challenge

Greetings, people. This day I seek to touch upon a very important and true fact, confronting our challenge and why we must place great and total emphasis on unity. People, it is difficult to imagine that one person, acting alone or even with others, will be able to deal a single blow to eliminate the biggest social challenges of our time without total unity, but surely, though, our inability to solve the world's most pressing problems does not mean we should not take on those we can.

See, for those of us who are considering confrontation as an alternative to a passive acceptance, we must note there are no "ten easy steps" to our adopting a more aggressive stance to the indignities suffered by individuals or groups I/we wish to defend; there are, though, certain considerations, cautions, as well as tactics that can help in us arriving at the decision to confront and implementing the challenge to this wrongful treatment. By us taking a stand and coming together we can and will end harassment of our youth and win respect.

This can bring about the change we seek not only for ourselves but also for others facing similar hurdles in life throughout the world. I concede that our struggle to unite our youth is possible, but it is hard for me sitting here in one of the many prison warehouses to imagine how one individual can mount a protest challenging this long established racist power system without the unity and close continuing support of our communities. So, people, dare to struggle, dare to win.



Aim for a Star

Aim for a star!
Never be satisfied with a life that is less than the best
Failure lies only in not having tried
In keeping the soul suppressed!!

Aim for a star!
Look up and away and follow its beckoning beam
Make each of your tomorrows a better today
And don't be afraid to dream!

Aim for a star
And keep your sights high!
With a heart full of faith within
Your feet on the ground
And your eyes on the sky
Some day you are bound to win.

Nightmare In America

With the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King JR, America once again debated the state of race relations and the plight of blacks in America. The domination question and the theme was how much progress has actually been made since the fatal shooting of the above civil rights leader April 4, 1968 in Memphis, TN on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel. Some cited the rise of the black middle class, the political success of the democratic presidential frontrunner Barack Obama, political, business, sports, entertainment and academic standouts as well as educational gains and the end of the legal segregation as proof of progress.

They argued that America is not perfect, and many in other countries have it worse. But they let the movement towards a more perfect union and Dr. King's dream of a society where everyone was equal, no matter what race, creed or color, is judged on the content of their character and not by the color of their skin. This plight of most non-white races still continues. But should one be talking about the progress at all? In a society where the original intent was to work blacks to death, it could be argued that anything above outright murder might be seen in progress (Although we all know racial-profiling, entrapment, false-arrest. And imprisonment along with cons, scams, assaults and murders upon innocent blacks are a daily occurrence in America and against other races as well.

The children of slaves don't need to just make "progress", which has and is always limited to the wishes and whims of their former slave masters. The children of slaves in America needs to embrace self-determination, the god-given right to make decisions "according to one's own mind, or will, without outside influence; free will." Blacks in America have never had the opportunity to decide their own fate and decide the type of relationship desired with the United States of America. There has been a constant clash between the oppressed and the oppressors, with neither seeing the others point of view.

But can the slave and slave masters ever see anything in the same light? During chattel slavery, the master determined ones names, ones mate, jobs, religions and whether they lived or died. The Jim Crow era brought legal segregation and laws that outweighed attempts to amend their condition and endow them with constitutional rights that whites had reserved for them selves. The 1950s, '60s and '70s where the watershed decades were the cry for black liberation and freedom exploded and legal segregation was abolished. But in 1978, the regents of the university of California Vs. Bakke court case decision unheard in legal attacks on affirmative action, a mild remedy to centuries of racial oppression and flat out murder. Now the words of Dr. King are being twisted to justify depriving his people of opportunity and the cause confusion about whether race should ever even be discussed or even be considered an issue at all.

Though the masses continue to go backwards and the black middle class clings to its precarious position in society. Progress in again determined by how much or how little the whites power structure decides to give to its colored, Negroes, or African Americans, depending on which phase is in vogue. The former slave masters may feel that another 80 years to become equal with them in high school graduations is fine. Having 1 in 9 young black men in prison may appear to whites to be an indication that the criminal justice system is working. The fact that blacks have only closed the per capita income gap with whites by only 3 cents on the dollar over the course of four decades and will take another 537 years to reach income parity may be acceptable to ones former slave masters.

But with black youth dropping out of schools, and jobs fleeing U.S shores, Black neighborhoods hemorrhaging hard-earned money, foreclosure, murder, poverty and AIDS rates at tremendously high rates high rates, can ones

Our next writer is writing to us from Crossroads Correctional Center in Cameron, Mo. This writer doesn't really need no introduction as he always seems to be in every issue we print out! But Herbert always comes with knowledge for all you readers out there. Like his upcoming piece "Nightmare In America" describes some of his political point of views and brings up some interesting points. Herbert is also quite spiritual also. So read his pieces and gain some wisdom from the O.G!

even wait another 537 years, 80 years, or even 4 more years for things to just get better? "Many blacks look at the American society that some blacks are doing well, making what they assume in progress, wealth and prestige, and they say, we're moving on up now. Things aren't so bad.

Why look at Oprah, Barack Obama, P. Diddy, Tiger Woods, Clarence Thomas, look at Collin Powell and Condoleezza Rice to name a few. Aren't they clear signs of progress? Much has been said about the growth of the black middle class and how it appears they've finally turned the corner in their never ending quest to attain the American dream. But is this real? Is it one of the tricks of Pharaoh and his magicians? It is designed to delay one's attainment of the true kingdom for his people? In reality ones have the illusion, the trappings of progress, but little else to show for ones 452 years in bondage and how as supposed free-slaves in North America." The true definition of a slave is one whose actions are not dictated by his or her own desires or even in their own interest.

If ones truly desire to be free, they must decide upon how much is enough and not be shackled to what they believe the white power structure as right or as reasonable. True progress will only occur when ones charts their own course and plans for their own future as past races that were enslaved by others did. But as long as ones continue to bow down to their former slave masters, sucking up to them, and selling their own peoples out to them, and fighting in their wars to protect their kingdom, then they will never achieve their God-given potential or embrace a divine- or gained future. Such present actions will only doom ones to complete destruction. If Obama becomes the first black President which I doubt, this would mean a black man would become commander-in-chief of the lethal superpower on the face of the earth.

In addition under his administration, he could influence world trade, the global financial markets, the course of the of Middle East and shape the direction of the U.S supreme court. Even more important Obama would possibly be privy to all or most of the United States dirty little secrets, and about all of its secrets of society. At least two other black men who stepped on or into the power stream of the United States were taken out. As our nation or some of us in this nation commemorates Dr. King, I can't help but worry if the rulers of a nation built on the foundation of white supremacy will once again see the dreamer coming. And then will they slay him also? So much tragedy confronts the big dreamers, especially the black Americans ones, that as father to a son I have to curb my enthusiasm. Not only has many great black leaders been taken from their dreams have been twisted and what does all of this past chaos, murder, and Mayhem portend for the next "Big Dreamer".

In Mr. Obama I see hope, I see in him promise, But then again I'm no fool. The enemy does not sleep, and the enemy comes at you from places and though ones you expect. One's need to step forward to push for change. Blacks and other poor still suffer disproportionately in our society. Changes in America are needed to bring about the true and full vision of justice and equal opportunity and love, love enough to speak justice to the entire nation espoused by Dr. King. Love is the key, the problem is there hasn't been enough of it being given bring about a real positive change. Activism, unity, and love is the key.

"624787". In his first national campaign ad for president, John McCain is shown reciting his rank and serial numbers as he lies in Vietnamese hospital bed as a prisoner of war. The ad describes him as "a real hero". Let's be clear; Senator McCain is running for president as a

continued from previous page

war hero. And criticizing a tribute to courageous and self-sacrificing soldiers would be disrespectful. But inextricably tied to the idea of a war for president is a discussion that goes beyond individual soldiers or prisoners of war, such as McCain, to the wars they fight and that their role in the war says about their moral merits as national leaders. This turns out to be surprisingly problematic. We need to distinguish the war hero from the war. Fixed ideas about war heroes get into what we call "morality wars," crucial struggles about which values should prevail, who should be admired and for what qualities.

When we call McCain a war hero, we engage in moral discourse about the Vietnam War and now Iraq. We also give McCain- currently the countries most celebrated war hero- the ultimate political weapon power by virtue of heroism and the ability to discredit opponents as weak or unpatriotic. The public has treated McCain's record in Vietnam and his status as a war hero as something unchangeable. But placing his placing his sacrifice beyond the pale, and that hushes important dialogue. McCain's heroism stems entirely from Vietnam. McCain was brave in captivity, but he and his fellow pilots dropped more bombs on Vietnam than all those dropped in World War 2, leading to the conclusion that "we had to destroy Vietnam in order to save it." But he did not acknowledge the war itself as immoral.

Had he engaged in such "straight talk" about the war itself, or if we had a more enlightened concept of heroism, he might not be so close to becoming the next president. The language of war heroism is used unfairly to confuse unjust wars and their architects with the honor of brave soldiers. By promoting the idea (lie) that Vietnam was an honorable war and denigrating antiwar democrats as too

weak to "stay the course".

Richard Nixon won the election in 1968. He then kept the Vietnam war going for another five futile years, sustained by that myth. Playing the war hero card has long been a political strategy to elect Republicans; legitimize imperial wars; and portray democrats and peace activist in Vietnam. Republicans even did the same to Daniel Ellsberg, a real hero of the Vietnam era. Ellsberg was a war planner who turned against the war and in 1971, at great personal risk, released to New York Times the "pentagon Papers," the military's internal and damning history of the war. But as there are no peace heroes, only war heroes in the American moral discourse, president Nixon tried to indict him and many still brand him as a traitor.

Ten out eleven presidents after the civil war were Republicans, the majority of whom were generals who ran as war hero's. In the 20th century, Republicans continued to serve up war hero candidates like Teddy Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, George H.W. Bush, a strategy that has worked for tens of decades. And now we have John McCain. If the democrats are to win elections in the 21st century, the key is to finally engage in straight talk about war and war hero's.

First, they must renounce the morality or militarism. Second, they must be clear that the architects of unjust wars are not honorable or heroic but immoral moralists, those who wage evil in the name of good. Third, they must create a new language of heroism. Brave soldiers in just and unjust wars may be heroes, if we refer purely to personal courage should also qualify as a character virtue for the highest office in the land. The peace hero, even more than the war hero, should be the ultimate moral force in the world we now inhabit.

"God's Love Embraces Us All"

What's the best response when someone on the street approaches you, begging for money? Some set a hard and fast rule, always give or never give. Others decide based on each encounter. Whether or not to respond with money is an individual decision, of course, but you can always respond mentally. One way is to recognize the person as your equal to God's eyes. In truth he or she is your spiritual brother or sister and deserves to be thought of that way regardless of their stature, race, or creed. But sometimes that's easier said than done. Feelings of aggravation, embarrassment, fear, or pity ect. may flare up before thoughts of brotherly love come to mind. Perhaps an acronym smile-can help.

Smile reminds us to see others in love's embrace, to see each individual as a child of God, worthy of God's love and ours. It's not trite, Pollyannaish, or merely intellectual activity to stop thinking of someone as downtrodden, hopeless instead. On the contrary, it's the most natural, satisfying, and powerful response we can have as reflections of God's true and divine love. In spite of appearances, everyone is actually made in the image and likeness of God, divine spirit (see Gen. 1:26,27). We all come from and live in spirit. There's no exception to that rule. As bible explains, "In him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). The tricky part is to understand that no matter how powerful material existence appears to be, it's not backed by divine authority. God, divine spirit where matter could exist and no way for matter to alter what spirit creates.

With that understanding, we can see how a dire situation might persuade someone to beg for money, but neither the circumstance nor the act of begging can devalue that person's perfect spiritual identity. Another name for God is love(see 1 John 4:8) "Father- mother is the name for deity,

which indicates his tender relationship his spiritual creation". We might think of that "tender relationship as an eternal embrace his love holding us close, providing for our every need, sheltering us from harm. As we consistently and persistently see that those who are begging for money are within love's eternal embrace, we lighten the load of negative thoughts weighing them down. Like lifting a sand bag off someone's shoulders, holding a spiritual view of those in need helps them stand taller. If we doubt the impact of seeing past outward appearances to the reality of God's pure and perfect creation, we have only to remember what an impact that type of spiritual vision had on those that Christ Jesus encountered. Take blind Bartimaeus, for example, who " sat by the highway side begging"(Mark 10:46). Jesus responded by seeing his God given perfection and healing him. Later, his disciples would in turn do the same.

Upon encountering a lame man begging at a gate on the temple, Peter saw something higher and holier than physical limitation. "Fastening his eyes upon him," peter healed him (See Acts 3:1-8). Explaining the Christ - like vision that heals, Jesus beheld the perfect man appeared to him where sinning mortal man appears to mortals. In this perfect man the savior saw God's own likeness, and this correct view of man healed the sick". The next time someone begs you for spare change, whether you offer money or not, be sure to smile and to see them in love's embrace. That type of spiritual seeing can open every ones eyes our own included to the good that God gives all of us, good that's always present and right and hand. Remember what Jesus said," What you do the least of these my brethren, Ye have done it unto me."

"Much love to you in Jesus Name!"

Pain In The Brain

Why is there pain?
 It comes down like the rain
 It comes form hell along the way
 But sometimes it don't go away
 But pain is permanently here to stay
 And it comes in assorted flavors
 From the assorted haters
 Like drugs, it's addicting
 And people like to hurt others, it's so freaking sickening
 They will never stop
 Like someone who so addicted to pot
 You can't leave this shhh alone and your marks are
 showing like the pain you deal
 No one gives a fuck how you feel
 They just keep dishing the shhh out
 That's not what life fucking about.

Our next writer is writing to us from Madison County Jail in Edwardsville, Ill. Chris is a new writer to our magazine. He has a lot of great pieces to share with all you readers out there. His topics range from love, to focusing on life's struggles for everyone, mainly our young voices out there. He acknowledges the fact that you young people are the future and you can't throw it away by making it a career by coming to jail. So open your ears up and let your eyes scroll the Chris' s wonderful pieces.

Words Can Be Powerful

Power in words can be powerful
 The works you use can be pain
 Things you say can change a life
 They also can take a life
 If you place them in the right
 You can be great
 But things you say also can be fake
 When you say a word
 It deserves a response
 Sometimes good
 Others are not
 The words you say
 Should come from the heart Even when it's time to
 depart
 Power is words
 Words are power

I Love You

These past few years, I suppose we've changed as often
 as the seasons
 But there has always been a rainbow at the end of each
 storm
 A calm that last as long as we're together
 I've been alone
 I've paced my steps over and again, but never once have
 you left my side
 We been through a lot
 We've grown in pain
 We've been stretched far beyond love's boundaries
 Yet there has never been a time that our arms weren't
 open wide for refuge
 To me, you're the peace that calms my windy days
 And brings about spring in the heart of every frozen
 winter
 I adore you, and my love for you is forever.

Friends

Friends are always there whether you're small or you
 are big. Friends are like a brother or a sister that you can
 trust because a friend will never lead a friend to danger.
 You will always find a friend that fits you best.
 Anything could be your friend, and that is very
 important. If you help a friend, you get a friend. I believe
 that love can never be destroyed.

Loving You

The passion sex is what I can see for everlasting
 I'm only grateful that I have the one and only
 And it's very special holding your love in my heart
 For every second that my heart beats memorizing every
 time you say you love me
 And you stay holding my love while people be hating on
 us
 But badly just remember they're only rumors that makes
 mistakes
 Even us but the thing that I can't hold in and gots to tell
 everyone is
 That I stay loving you always no matter what
 You're my one and only that's why I stay loving you.

Goal

Stay focused on your goal until you succeed
 Others come to distract you, the majority of time it's
 due to greed
 Once you lose your focus and let them distract you
 Then you're slippin' in the elements of the world for
 negativity are destined to attack you So stay focused on
 your goal 'till you succeed in your time of need
 Stay focused on your goal no matter what anyone has to
 say
 This could be the major step in your life that sends you
 on your way
 So stay focused.

US

Time is spent
 Not to waste my time
 It's not free like I know it's meant to be
 Some people can't see our youth is falling away
 What can be told
 Our faith is still untold
 Now aging away with tomorrow is the future
 What will it bring to the young
 If there is still violence and guns.

Trapped

I'm trapped in a cage
 Feeling the rage
 Run through my veins like sage
 I feel like a Jew in a concentration camp
 My cell is damp
 Man, I can't do this any more
 The walls are closing in
 I need some freakin' gin
 Have to pick my self off this freaking cold ground
 'Cause all I'm sportin' is a frown
 I feel like a freakin' clown
 Now I'm trapped in the belly of the beast.

Respect

You got to give respect to get respect. For me, this is what I be feeling and what I'm saying about respect to people because when people disrespect me, it doesn't look good. I give respect to people and sometimes I get stabbed in the back, which isn't good.

But anyways, it's all good because I am me and they are them. They did not make me so they can't break me. But what it takes to get me respect is too keep it real and be straight forward with me and don't be stuck up.

I Can't Sleep

I can't sleep

I have too many things running through my mind
 I'm short-circuits in my brain
 Trying to find the loose wire that I obviously overlooked
 And it caused me to hurt
 The reason I got booked

I can't comprehend the phrase that I'm pleading
 "I'm guilty" can't come out now, like my mind is fleeing.

Don't Be Afraid

Don't be afraid to love someone totally and completely. Love is the most fulfilling and beautiful feeling is the world. Don't be afraid that you will get hurt or that the other person won't love you.

There is a risk in every thing that you do, and the rewards are never so great as what love can bring. Let yourself get involved completely and honestly, so you can enjoy the possibility that what happens might be the only real source of happiness.

*Real love isn't like a fairy tale
 Real love is when you're
 in heaven instead of hell*

Real Love

Real love just ain't sex

Real love ain't pass the joint and let me hit it

Real love ain't doing what you have to please her

Real love ain't a black eye saying you ran into the door

Real love ain't being called a bitch or a whore

Real love don't have a price on it

Real love isn't pain

Real love isn't a game

Real love isn't looks

Real love isn't like a fairy tale

Real love is when you're in heaven instead of hell

Why Did You Go

Why you have to go away

And leave me with no place to stay

Treating me as if I was a stray

I hated it when your day would come

You always told me you love me but I knew it was a lie

'Cause when you said it you never look me in the eye

I thought to myself why would she not stay away

Because the beezie wanted to make me miserable

And for that I wish the beezie would die.

QUINCY VAUGHN

Light Shines Through Darkness

Hey what it do potna? I know you hangin' in there because only the strong survive! Me, I'm cool considering my circumstances and situation! Remember and never forget light shines through darkness; darkness doesn't shine through light. I don't care how dark of a place you are in; if you strike a match; turn on a flash light or pull back a curtain on a sunny day, light will pass through. On the other hand darkness can only survive lest the sun goes down, and even than it still does not prevail because light is somewhere all of the time. Why? Because light shines through darkness.

Now lets be completely honest with ourselves. Who really loves complete darkness? (besides at bedtime.) Okay you say you do, right? Okay so you are indicating you would rather live in complete darkness than to live in the light, right? Well allow me break down such contradiction like an Algebra equation, and explain to you why that cannot work.

If there is total darkness, how would could one see? Wouldn't the world than would be filled with blind men and woman? Further more, how could one make a living without lights? Even before the invention of electricity followed by the invention of the light bulb there was still light, light from the sun in the daytime, candles lit by small fires and the stars and moon to provide light at night.

How about Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, Larry Bird, Magic Johnson, Steve Nash, Pistol Pete Maravich, The Ice Man, Julius Irvin, or John Paxton gave perfected their basketball game without lights. If you are not a fan of basketball, or just not a fan of sports, than instead of using the names I chose, use names of people who you know or can identify with whom have made a positive impact in your life. Like your parents; a family member; a friend; a famous painter; a musician; a rapper; a sculptor, or car sales man/woman.

Life may seem hard, but you must see your self as a classic, and in order to create a classic, elbow grease has to be used. Know

Our next writer is writing to us from Cross Roads Correctional Center in Cameron, Mo. Quincy was introduced to The Beat Within by his friend Herbert Schweigert. Quincy offers some friendly advice for anyone to take. He clearly lets all y'all know that y'all can do whatever you put your mind to. So why put your mind into all that negative shhh that's only gonna get you in jail for life or have you wind up dead. He wants all you young readers to take heed of his words and believe in yourselves!

you are going through what you are going through for your good, your character is being built, and the foundation to your life is being laid. Remember and never forget, in order to get to where you want to be in life, substance has to be embedded into your heart. You have to be put through the fire, and only than when the fire has to transformed you into a classic, may you proceed into your life of destiny.

If you see yourself as a classic, than you will take the proper steps to show you believe you are a classic. Classics are not built overnight, it takes tons of tons of diligent "hard work", faith, determination, practice, and "PATIENCE". Don't worry about the haters that will try to discourage you, believe in your heart (by your actions) that you will succeed. You must be willing to shed tears of "Blood" as if you have run out... as if you have done everything there is to do. Haters come in all ages, different genders, shapes, and sizes...Yes that right...very good just like Doritos.

Keep your guard up and bar none, (except yo' elder hold your tongue) don't be arrogant, but don't be afraid to speak your mind. Let your game (whatever your doing) do your talking for you, keep your game face on, mean business! I believe in you!

In conclusion remember quitters never win and winners never quit. So if you don't succeed the first, second, third, fourth, or gazillionth time try again. (As long as it won't lead you to prison, you got my support) I love you and promise to write The Beat often to check on my new friends.

In Heaven

Each day I wake up
 I am on trial with the devil
 He stands by an open grave
 Leaning on a shovel

He stole my family
 With the help of the reaper
 Put me away in prison
 His imps my keepers

It started early in life
 When I was only a child
 He used and abused me
 I felt defiled

The more I resisted
 My family had to pay
 He took one after another
 Keeping me at bay

I refuse to submit,
 My struggle is hard
 If the answer is in Heaven
 I pray you help me, Lord!

Our next writer is writing to us from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, Ca. Here are a few poems from Horace Bell, Our ol' friend always takes the time to write great pieces of creative work. Keep the great poems coming Horace!

Scum

It's the kook kook nest
 Home of the lunatics
 With an educated few
 Playing politics

Races divided
 Color draws the line
 Most refuse to program
 Obsessed with doing time

The worse of the worst
 Each day walk the yard
 Preying on the weak
 Taking down the hard

Education helps
 Weed through the scum
 Or you become a victim
 Loath some!

Bound

Time to put it down again
 I am way behind
 Couldn't see through tomorrow
 Clouded thoughts in my mind

I've come to my senses
 I can see brighter days
 Like rays from the sun
 Which somehow seem to say

I am back on track
 With still a long way to go
 But now I am not unstable
 Because I know

Life is a hurdle
 A leap and a bound,
 Always a struggle
 To stand on even ground.

Story

I am just a prisoner
 Living on the edge
 My case has been to court
 My innocence pled

And once they turned the key
 It was a sickening sound
 It punctuated the air
 It was profound

And yet they slammed another door
 And using the same key
 I can still hear the echo
 They took away my liberty!

I stood among other men
 People of no certain glory
 We had nothing in common
 Except each could tell a story

Young, prime, and middle age
 We stood naked and cold
 Humiliated, stripped of dignity
 The horrors to come untold!

Forward

The sound of music
 Fills the morning air
 I am surrounded by the lyrics
 The melody is everywhere!

It causes me to reminisce
 At the liberty I lost
 The trials and tribulations
 I am paying the ultimate cost

Rounding off at ten years
 All the crap I been through
 From the false trial and conviction
 To being framed inside here, too!

I'm back in court now
 Freedom my mission
 I struggle and fight hard
 With little intermission

It's a long road
 Miles and miles of stretch
 Putting my best foot forward
 With every single breath

Stacked Against You
 The Horrible
 In jail with a case
 So much out of life
 Has come to a waste

In jail or prison
 Ain't no joke
 Some are filled with hatred
 Trying to cope

Especially on the inside
 It's so hard to win
 The odds are stacked against you
 From beginning to end

In jail or in prison
 You can't get a grip
 Each day is a struggle
 Another way-out trip

The Story of Eric and Jeremy

Eric and Jeremy are the same age, attend the same school, and even share some classes. They even live in the same neighborhood. But, that's where the similarities end. You see, Eric is handsome young boy with his dark hair and looks, he even dresses fancy with flared collars, expensive shoes, and sometimes even a suit.

Jeremy on the other hand is a simple young boy. He's overweight, has dark hair, and finds it difficult to develop serious friendships. He's constantly the object of bullies and bad jokes, and sometimes runs away in tears from the hurt he feels. He's also prime meat for a predator. Eric is a predator, and sees Jeremy as a person who needs a friend and someone he can use. He convinces Jeremy that he's the only friend he has and will do anything for him. He even stands up for him when the other kids at school pick on him.

One day, Jeremy happened to overhear a conversation Eric was having with some other students. What he heard was Eric saying how he actually felt about him, and, what he really meant to him as a friend. Once again, Jeremy was crushed, but this time he didn't run away crying. This time, he got angry and told Eric he didn't need that kind of a friend and he'd be fine going through life without him as a friend.

As time went on, Eric became another one of the many kids who targeted Jeremy and was more cruel than they, because of his past closeness to Jeremy. Both boys graduated from school, and went on to college. Eric ended up dropping out and depending on his good looks to get him through life. Jeremy not only graduated from college with honors, but went on to head a fortune 500 company.

As it turned out, Eric had to humble himself before Jeremy and begged him for a favor. Eric, thinking Jeremy is still weak and impressionable, wanted Jeremy to take care of him and give him money, whenever he wanted it.

Jeremy decided to take a different approach. He gave Eric a job in his company, paid him an entry level salary, and now has Eric calling him sir and apologizing all the time for the way he treated Jeremy when they were younger.

The moral of the story is, no matter what others may think of you, what's important is what you think of yourself.

Our next writer is writing to us from a Correctional Institution in Raiford, Fla. Shawn is not new to The Beat Within. If you have been reading our Beat Without Pages for the past several issues you can find Shawn spitting some game for all you readers out there. In the upcoming piece Shawn talks about poetry and the magic it can do for many people. Not only does Shawn has a piece on poetry, but he also has a short story he would like to share with y'all with a moral behind it. So kick your socks off, and lay back on your bunk and listen to Shawn's stories!

Wisdom Through Poetry

For those of you who haven't had an opportunity to listen to spoken word poetry, you don't know what you're missing. The messages delivered are to the point, no holds barred, and not sugarcoated. Spoken word poetry is not new to the area. It has been around for nearly 20 years, but has gone ignored by the populace that prefers loud music, dangerous clubs, and undressed patrons.

And as much as some people never want anyone to tell them what they need to do to make their lives better, there is still a need to at least try it before you condemn it. It couldn't hurt, and you could walk away with more than you bargained for. The poets speak of the need for awareness and the reality of our day-to-day lives. Some of it may come across as a bit radical, but the truth sometimes has to hurt.

These men and women are very educated when it comes to the economics and social graces we take for granted. They spend more at the firing line than any of us, and they see and hear the things we ignore. Sometimes, when it's revealed to someone, the things they try to pretend don't exist, that word is perceived as radical or just plain trouble.

Throughout the life of African-Americans, awareness is something that's always been preached. The late Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were at the forefront of creating awareness, and since they were silenced, no one else has stepped forward. Awareness has taken a back seat and our communities have turned into battlegrounds.

Just as families once worshipped together in church, that the union is what spoken words poets are trying to recreate. If you listen to their words and put them in perspective, you'll begin to see the logic in what they're saying. It's never too late to admit you're wrong. Give spoken word poetry a try and see if it's beneficial to you. I'm sure you'll leave either refreshed or angry. Either way, you've left with more than you came in with.

ERIC PETERSON

Our next writer is writing to us from Selma, Alabama. Eric, was introduced to The Beat Within by Curtis Cook, and the rest of his friends. In his first publication for the Beat Eric writes a religious piece about his special connection with God. And his second piece Eric clearly talks about the love that walked out of his life or no longer is in his life. Eric writes down his feelings with no kind of embarrassment as he dedicates the last piece to that special person that he misses very much. So without any more hesitation please give it up for Eric.

Can We Make it like it was

The pain that I have caused you
 Is something that cannot be explained.
 What I have for you is no word that can be found
 I admit acting like a fool
 But it's only because I didn't know what I wanted to do
 So can we make it like it was
 Remember when we first kiss it was all so great
 I'm addicted to what we had and what we make
 If you love me don't deny and fight it
 Cause you know that you suppose to be beside me every night
 So stop trying to fight it
 So can we make it like it was?
 You know that I love you so why fight it
 I can't sleep without you
 Knowing that you are going fight it
 I know that I can't find another love like you
 So we can make it like it was
 I can't go or live without you
 I don't want to be without you
 It wasn't suppose to be this way, where did I go wrong
 My heart seems like it don't want to close

But I know that I will have to and be strong
 Without you.

So can we make it like was
 24/7 you are on my mind
 Ask me again and I love you
 'Cause if this is meant to be
 I know that I would be close to thee
 You know that I love you
 And would do anything for you
 So can we make it like it was
 What went wrong between me and you
 I thought our love was going to last forever
 So I guess forever and never last for so long
 I think about it every night about what has gone wrong
 So can we make it like it was?

*...make your next choice your best choice.
I hope the youngsters learn from my
mistakes and don't make this jail and
prison stuff a lifetime thing. It's not
worth it... trust me.*

read the rest of Raymond Salazar's BWO piece on page 57

